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A Twenty-first Century Light Music Composer

Sailing on: composing light music in the twenty-first century.

Peter Richard Birkby

Book 1 of 6 of a thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

The University of Huddersfield School of Music Humanities and Media

July 2016

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Acknowledgements

It has been a long and significant journey to reach this point and thank you to Geoffrey Cox for supervising my deliberations during the studies and family and friends for giving me support and time. Thank you to Elizabeth Elliott for having clear vision and many other colleagues who have shown me various directions to travel including Lisa Colton and Rupert Till.

During the past six years of part-time study I have had the pleasure of collaborating with a number of musicians who have willingly discussed and appraised the music I created from the perspective of instrumental specialists. Thank you to Fred T. Baker, Peter Fairclough, Helen Madden and the members of the *Mixed Metals Percussion Ensemble*: Nigel Chapman, Matthew Dabbs, Steven Kohut, Mike Parkin, Keith Ramskill, Phil Steventon and Leo Le Yu for your assistance. Another part of the process has involved recording and performing a number of works and thank you to Joe Bradford, Jack Green, Brian Jones, Al McNichol and Stewart Worthy for resources and technical help during these events and to the composers who were happy to discuss their work and music business in general including: Greg Francis, Tony Hatch, Duncan Lamont, Richard Ingham and Pete Wraight and promoters Andy Crompton and Jeremy Peaker.

Many light music libraries were broken up, and some sent for landfill, when the music fell out of fashion. It is only through the dedication of enthusiasts that a collection of scores and parts, many in hand written manuscript format, have been rescued and made available for use. Thank you to Hilary Ashton, Helen Andrews and Dan Adams at the Library of Light Orchestral Music for the welcome and use of the resource.

Abstract

Sailing on is an investigation into how light music has evolved from its origins into a style of music for the twenty-first century. I am a light music composer and a contemporary use of the style is explored in a portfolio of compositions, all in score form, substantiated by an autoethnographical commentary.

Light as a term to describe music was first used in the nineteenth-century to label music that was created for the entertainment of the masses and it was sometimes used to explain the more accessible works of 'serious' composers. The music enjoyed a golden age of approximately one hundred years between 1870 and 1970 and this study contextualises light music in respect of the functions that it fulfils and the relationships it has undergone with serious and popular music during the period and to the present day.

Entertainment and accessibility to mass markets are terms used more in relation to commercial music rather than art music and the thesis includes an exploration into the role of light music as part of the industrialised music businesses as well as being at the forefront of technological developments. The relationship between art and money has been difficult for some to reconcile and part of the reason for the criticism and neglect of light music by many in the music establishment and these aspects are considered as part of the contextualisation.

I have identified a number of common musical and expressive elements in light music and an analysis of techniques is presented as a means to describe the characteristics of the style. The works surveyed have been selected from a period that embraces the golden age to the present with examples from records, radio, television, film, games and web based media.

All these influences plus my own experiences in music have been considered during the composition of the portfolio of music that proffers my interpretation of light music for the twenty-first century.

Introduction

This thesis approaches the study of Light Music from a number of perspectives including: the effects of transformation in business and cultural thinking that have influenced perceptions of the music, an analysis of musical techniques and methods used in the music and the practical application of these concepts in a portfolio of compositions. My contribution to knowledge is to offer suggestions as to what light music is now and establish more connections between art and entertainment musics for possible future recognition through study and research. The musical analysis considers what factors might combine to constitute light music, with relevant musical analysis, and these elements are explored in the portfolio of compositions that present my practice as a version of light music in the twenty-first century. Light music is often linked to commercial practice and the recent developments of listening and viewing technologies for individual users coupled with the reshaping of cultural habits regarding the monetary and aesthetic values of music have, and still are, affecting music businesses, composers and performers and the significant changes in these areas are explored in the context of being a light music composer in the twenty-first century.

Light music is a label that has been used to represent music that often defies categorisation. An example of this can be found in the International Association of Sound and Audiovisual Archives explanation of Popular Music describing the term light music as covering a very wide range of musical output:

The area covered by the term light music is enormous, ranging as it does from folk music to heavy metal rock, operetta to jazz, country and western to big band dance music and film and Broadway musicals to current chart pops. It is difficult to place all these varying styles and numerous forms into any sort of comprehensible collection, and one that is retrievable and makes any sort of sense to library staff, researchers or users of any kind (Ranft, 2010).

This definition regards the term light music as impossible to classify and therefore redundant but my contention is that it is still possible to describe the music in terms of a combination of music related techniques that could bring some clarification to the term. This description, detailed later, will show that light

music is predominantly instrumental music with precise orchestrations that leave little or no space for improvisation and therefore would exclude most operetta, jazz, country and western, Broadway musicals and much of the chart pops.

Light music has been used to describe much of the music that is in the wide area flanked by serious and popular music, between high and low art and is part of the middlebrow, between highbrow and lowbrow, having some merit but not enough to be taken very seriously: not serious enough for the majority of academics and critics from the musical establishment but also too sophisticated for popular musicians. In *Music and society since 1815* Henry Raynor (1976, p. 157) disparagingly states that light music 'is invariably a simplification of things current, or recently current, in other musical spheres.' That light music has no original ideas and is just taken from other musics is a criticism I hope to dispel in this thesis and show how the music has been, and still is, an integral part of a contemporary music landscape.

The 'golden age' of light music was during the late nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries when it thrived in tandem with the development of new technologies and the commercial growth of media industries in publishing, recording, radio and cinema. The first use of the term light to describe the music was around the mid nineteenth-century during a time of cultural change that Derek Scott (2009, pp. 3-4) describes as a 'popular music revolution' that was 'driven by social changes and the incorporation of music into a system of capitalist enterprise: it resulted in a polarization between the style of musical entertainment (or "commercial" music) and that of "serious" art.' In the preceding centuries composers had invariably composed for themselves without regard to how the work would be categorised and many switched between commercial and serious output in order to supplement the financial support that some achieved by way of patronage. Introducing business and commercialism into music was a threat to the ideological hegemony of the European musical establishment and was resisted as far as possible through criticism of the 'light' or 'easy' music (Scott, 2009, p. 5). Light music was developed as a response to the requirements of a mainly disenfranchised audience in partnership with industrialisation and innovation to create new music for new markets. Roy

Shuker (1994, pp. 24-29) describes the development of rock as a revolution that was commercialised by industrial institutions resulting in it becoming a popular and moneymaking style and this can be perceived as very similar to the progress that light music followed one hundred years earlier. Crucially the innovation and opportunities offered by rock and roll replaced light music as the main commercial music during the 1960s and quickly brought an end to the golden age period.

Both these periods of change, or revolution, that necessitated new and entertaining music brought about polarisations of viewpoints between the high art supporters and the advocates of the middle or low arts often with an entrenched, with us or against us attitude from the most vociferous musicians and critics. An example of this single-minded line is apparent in the writings of Pierre Boulez (1991, p. 113) from 1952: 'let me state, in my turn, that any musician who has not experienced – I do not say understood, but truly experienced – the necessity of dodecaphonic language is USELESS. For his entire work brings him up short of the needs of his time.' Despite the high art expectations of Boulez and others it was ironic that dodecaphonic or twelve-tone music was being used, from the mid 1950s onwards, to create moods in the scenes of some commercially produced films. One of the first examples can be found in the music of Leonard Roseman for the film *The Cobweb* in 1955 (Prendergast, 1997, p. 119) and the music by Jerry Goldsmith for the film *Planet of the Apes* in 1968, including a number of sections of what he described as 'free twelve-tone' (Dupuis, 2014, p. 79), was nominated for an Oscar. During the twentieth-century film and recording, and latterly film and television, became the main commercial users of instrumental music. As the use of music in the media became more prevalent no technique or style was too serious, light or popular for film composers, in collaboration with the directors, to incorporate in order to create the desired effect.

From a high art or serious music perspective light music very quickly became a pejorative term with many negative associations although the middle-ground connotation of the term was used in United Kingdom education for many years after the end of the golden age without any negative overtones. I studied at

Leeds College of Music on the *Light Music Course* during the 1970s although that title was quite anachronistic as the majority of the historical research and performance opportunities were mainly based on jazz. Researching for other examples from the period it is not clear what 'light' represented other than it was not classical yet it could be serious. Some of these examples include biographical information such as this line taken from the 1981 entry on Adrian Ingram's website: 'Appointed full time Lecturer in Guitar and Light Music at Huddersfield Technical College' (Ingram, 2015). Performing light music was regarded as part of the orchestral repertoire as can be seen from the course content description of the National Centre for Orchestral Studies in the United Kingdom, opened in September 1979, stating that students

'were given the opportunity to play as wide a range of music as possible. I always encouraged conductors to conduct music they had a particular interest in, be it contemporary music or the music of British composers, opera, light music, or those dedicated to the "authenticity" movement and performance on period instruments.' (Tschaikov, 2006, ch. 22, para. 11).

A conversation with my supervisor Dr. Geoffrey Cox revealed his music education in Liverpool in the early 1990s included intensive preliminary and diploma courses in light music and another full-time two year *Light Music Diploma* course was taught at Wakefield College according to course leader Richard Ingham (2016, personal correspondence). The course was devised by staff in Wakefield and started in 1988 to prepare suitable students who were not classically trained for the jazz and popular music degree courses that were becoming established at Leeds College of Music and Salford University. The light music courses were superseded by the *Btec National Diploma in Popular Music* that emerged in the mid 1990s as a nationally recognised award. Currently the term has disappeared from course titles in college, conservatoire and university music departments in this country although there are a number of Indian universities offering diploma in light music courses based on utility and popular music practice rather than purely classical Indian traditions.

The majority of music produced by light music composers was mainly for the commercial music industry and the role of the composer has changed with the demands of business. An example of the pitch a composer could be expected

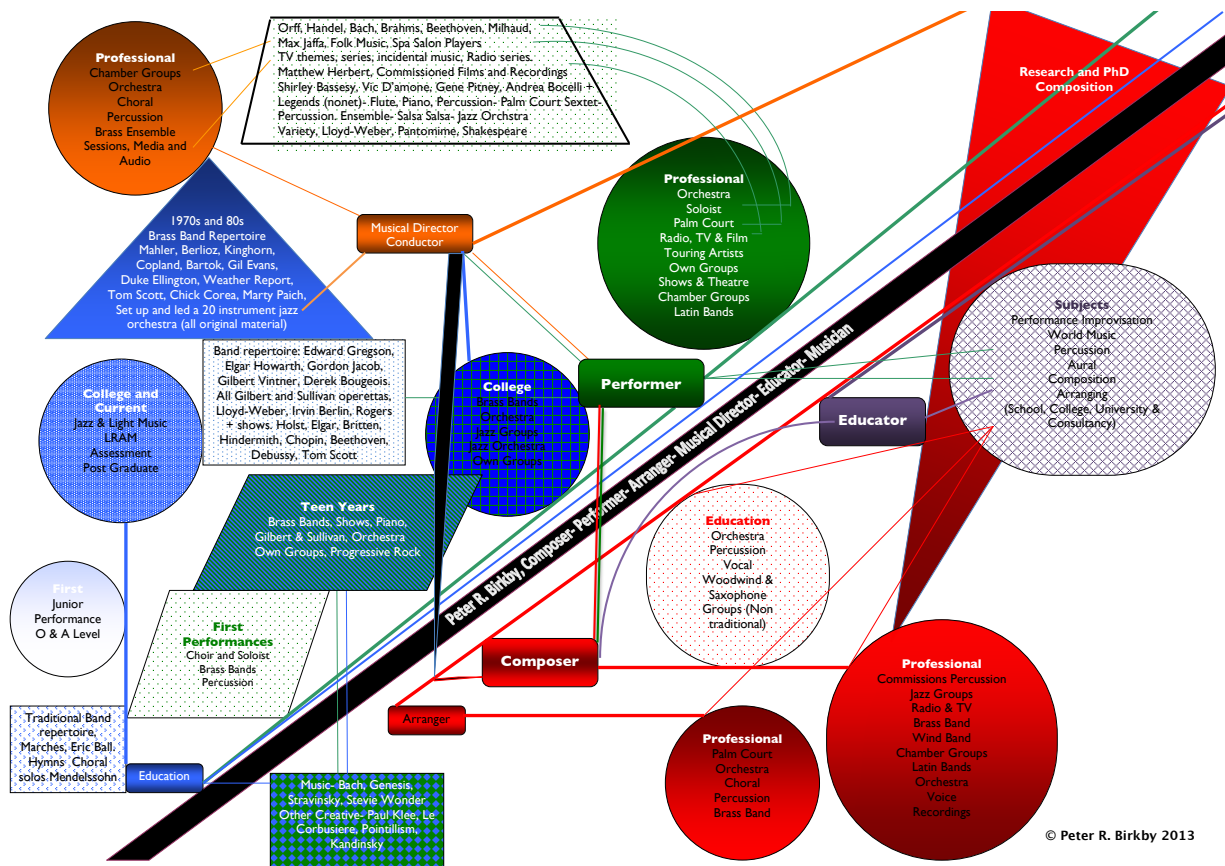
to create these days is a recording of the music with marketing elements for little or no remuneration. This speculative production is usually to be completed with a two to three-day turnaround and colleagues have affirmed that earning a living from composition in this area is becoming more difficult. The reduction in fees with the pressure on time is not confined to the commercial music area as the 2015 *Composer Commissioning Survey* from Sound and Music confirms that composers were offered 'fewer commissions and lower earnings, again.' With time being 'listed as one of the big reasons why respondents turn down commissions' (Sound and Music, 2015, p.3). A discussion regarding how music has been devalued in monetary terms and how it could regain some value in the future is a thesis in its own right and will not be discussed in detail here but some of the intrinsic parts of being a light music composer, mainly the commercial application of the music, will be considered. The enterprising behaviour of some light music composers will also be discussed especially in regard to their work being at the forefront of changes in technology.

With a view to explaining the individual nature of light music I have undertaken some detailed musical analysis that illustrates many of the techniques used in the composition of the music which could assist in the clarifying the unique aspects of the style. The analysis identifies light music in terms of musical practices rather than formulating a classification around a canon of works which would be a subjective high art method of evaluating composers. With time to fully assess a body of work opinions may change as to the significance, highbrow or middlebrow, of the music created as has been the case for Benjamin Britten and Dmitri Shostakovich (Chowrimootoo, 2014, p.190) and another reason for not using the canon of works method is that the breadth of music to choose from is too vast for any meaningful selections. This more analytical method of defining the music may avoid any future promotions and demotions of composers and their works and it will concentrate on the fundamental qualities of light music. The contention is that light music incorporates many styles of music and composers throughout the centuries have created music that has the characteristics and inherent qualities of light music and that these are still prevalent in music produced in this century.

My composition style is regarded by some as light music (Scowcroft, 1998) and I am aware of the influences of performance, composition and arranging experiences with Max Jaffa, Alyn Ainsworth, Stanley Black, Bernard Herman, Ronnie Hazelhurst and many other light music practitioners coupled with similar involvements with contemporary, folk, jazz, world and popular musics in the concert hall and studio. A memorable melody is arguably the most fundamental attribute of light music with a requirement to entertain the listener running a close second. Melody and rhythm are the two most important musical elements in my work and during the composition process I often consider how to create a positive musical experience for performer(s) and listeners. It is difficult to judge if I achieve my aims in this respect although the fact that I have been commissioned a number of times by the same people could be one measure.

The harmonic elements in light music are generally a secondary consideration although mood, and the ambience created by certain harmonies, can play an important part in the interaction of the music with an audience. This is in contrast with the complex harmonic structures and intellectuality of high art music and a reliance on lyrics in much of the low art music to interest the listener. I am comfortable experimenting with, and often using, elements from any music perspective in my work and I know from past conversations that the composers and musicians mentioned in the previous paragraph were equally at ease in the high, middle and lowbrow worlds.

At the start of this study period I attempted to draw together my lifetime's experiences in music and art with the view that the resulting information could assist in the definition of my work in the twenty-first century. The following is a graphic representation of that information, taking an extra-musical influence from Kandinsky's painting *Transverse Line* (1923) as the basis for the design, showing my experiences as a musician, composer, arranger, performer, musical director, teacher and lecturer. Rather than defining my work the process of gathering this information together drew a line under what had gone before and enabled me to progress with some more experimental methods although always with an audience in mind to both challenge and entertain.



(Size to be A3 and a double page spread)

The substantive part of this submission is the portfolio of compositions with commentaries as contributions to a twenty-first century light music aesthetic. In the portfolio there are five works, from an output of over thirty works completed during the period of study, that exhibit my interpretations of light music in the twenty-first century. The portfolio consists of the scores to: a percussion quartet with fixed media, a concerto for bass guitar with strings and percussion, a competition entry of music to images for an ensemble of Chinese and Western instruments, a single movement work for saxophone and piano and an open ended composition, that lasts at least 50 minutes, for drum kit with percussion ensembles. Some of the works not included but undertaken during this period are commissions with specific briefs and individual arrangements for ensembles that could not be included due to copyright restrictions. The portfolio of compositions combine the techniques that I have identified and analysed as the qualities of light music together with my experiences from jazz, popular, contemporary, world and classical musics that create the musical mix from which my compositions are conceived.

The six-years of part-time study has taught me to consider and reflect in far more detail than I would have previously and from this has unexpectedly grown an appreciation of words and the vagaries of the English language. One of the enjoyable consequences of the course of study has been playing with words and this has resulted in a volume of poetry and one poem from the collection, *The Artists' Dilemma*, is included in the final reflective section.

Chapter 1

I have never acknowledged the difference between 'serious' music and 'light' music. There is only good music and bad music. (Weill in King, 1940)

What is this thing called light music?

Difficult to define, more criticised than celebrated, rejected rather than researched, light music has rarely been considered as a subject for scholarly investigation. Already published are: Geoffrey Self's *Light Music in Britain since 1870* (2001), Derek B. Scott's *Sounds of the Metropolis* (2009) that discusses the commercialisation of entertainment music in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, biographies of some of the more prominent light music composers of which Michael Payne's *The Life and Music of Eric Coates* (2012) is an example and a number of sourcebooks or collections of biographies. Hugo Cole in his book *The Changing Face of Music* (1978) includes a section of a chapter about the decline of light music, a chapter in *The Cambridge Companion to the Saxophone* (1999) written by Gordon Lewin aptly titled *The Undocumented* and a chapter by Derek B. Scott Other mainstreams: light music and easy listening, 1920-70 is included in *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-century Music* (2004) but other than these titles light music is rarely featured in scholarly writing despite the prominence it enjoyed on radio, records and in print for over one hundred years. As Simon Frith (2004, p. 2) observed in his introduction to *Popular Music: Music and Society, Volume 1*: 'even now lacunae remain: jazz studies and popular music studies are still mostly distinct; dance studies have evolved quite separately; "light" music is neglected completely.' The techniques and character of light music are still evident in much of the music produced for film, television and the web today that Keith Negus (2006, p. 329) identified in television productions as 'a type of ambient light music, associated with artists such as Brian Eno, Aphex Twin, Moby and Air... to enhance or add sonic momentum to visually predictable programmes featuring sports, gardening, holidays, cooking, home changes, makeovers and so on' yet during my research I have found this area is mostly unrepresented in academic writing despite the ubiquitousness of light music in the media.

Light music is predominantly instrumental with an emphasis on melody and a memorable theme or hook is one of the main constituents of the style as the late president of the Light Music Society Ernest Tomlinson explains in the foreword to *British Light Music* (Scowcroft, 2013, p 4) 'Light music is about melody first and foremost.' These melodies are structured and orchestrated in an intelligible or conventional way that can easily be understood by an audience and this treatment of melodic material shows a firm relationship with popular music with the instrumental nature of the music having its roots in the classical music tradition. Light music has evolved as audience expectations develop and composers assimilated musical elements from many styles and genres to be able to directly communicate with this audience.

Having important traits from both musical worlds the music occupies the broad area between contemporary art music and popular music. Originally conceived as music to appeal to both the concert audience and for performance in the home some examples are: orchestral dance music such as the Viennese waltz, incidental music and overtures from theatrical works, suites, duets and features for individual instruments which were commercially available as sheet music with some being recorded later. Light music was a significant part of the music for the early film industry with the accompanists or accompanying ensembles for the silent films having libraries of compositions written to define the mood for any scene from love and pathos to mild peril and catastrophe. Titles such as *A Thousand Kisses* by Archibald Joyce and *Dramatico Agitato* by Albert Ketèlbey are obvious examples. As broadcasting developed, first with radio and then television, light music played a significant part in BBC music programmes with over fifty per cent of the music heard on radio being light (Briggs in Doctor, 1999, p. 40) between 1925 and 1929. As radio divided into more specialist stations and television became more prominent many traits of light music could be discerned in theme tunes and incidental music and as the visual medias of television, film, video games and the web become more symbiotic melodic instrumental music plays an important identification role today. Another key part of the accessibility of light music was that it was often transcribed for other instruments and amateur performers. Light music composers continue to compose for this group of

musicians and this can be heard in music used in educational settings as well as music for amateur/community groups and ensembles.

In the following list are many of the other names that are used to describe music that include elements of, but is not solely, light music: popular orchestral, easy listening, popular classics, popular symphonic, salon, concert, test card, lounge, background, beautiful, elevator, furniture, new age, relaxation, middle of the road [MOR], loungecore, chillout, music while you work, crossover, adult contemporary, downtempo, ambient, music of the spas, palm court, shmusic and kitsch. Light music as a term encompasses various styles as these categories mainly taken from commercial music publicity testify and the following section has examples of how more academic literature regards, or avoids, the term.

The category light music does not have a subject entry in *Oxford Music Online* although the term is used to describe contents of music publishers' catalogues with distinctions being made such as 'good light music' appearing in at least one entry (Plesske, 2015) and another describes the galop as a type of music found 'in the light music of 20th-century Russian composers such as Prokofiev (*Cinderella*, 1945), Khachaturian (*Masquerade*, 1939), Kabalevsky (*The Comedians*, 1940) and Shostakovich (*The Limpid Brook*, 1934)' (Lamb, 2015). I have no doubt that the list of names for music that contains many light music qualities will continue to grow as more descriptive terms to target listeners become more prevalent for marketing purposes and the term 'light' becomes more synonymous with a period in music history rather than a style of music. During the golden age period, approximately between 1870 and 1970, light music was ever-present: in the concert hall including the promenade concerts, in theatrical productions, in cinemas as the accompaniment to silent films, on radio including having its own station on the BBC between 1945 and 1967, the *Light Programme*, as well as other similar stations throughout Europe some of which still promote their output as light music today such as *NPO Radio 5* in the Netherlands (Dean, 2015) and the internet station *Radio Six International*. As the golden age period came to an end the music was incorporated in the newly developing technology of television as both theme tunes and incidental music for all types of productions. My contention is that light music as a style has never

stopped being composed and published, although the term 'light' has fallen out of favour, and my argument is for the recognition and re-instigation of this overarching term to describe 'music with an immediate appeal, music with melody, music to entertain - music to enjoy!' (Light Music Society, 2010). In the foreword to *Conductors and Composers of Popular Orchestral Music* writer and researcher David Ades (Musiker & Musiker, 1996, p. ix) describes popular orchestral music, or light music, as 'rarely taken seriously, yet appeals to millions who seldom realize that it is a clearly distinguishable art form in its own right.' A few light music composers are beginning to be recognised as can be seen by BBC Radio 3's *Composer of the Week* scheduling that has featured Eric Coates, William Alwyn, Richard Addinsell with Noel Coward, Gordon Jacob with Joseph Horowitz and Constant Lambert with Alan Rawsthorne (BBC, 2015, [1]) although these are a small minority in the roster of selected composers.

Light as a term to define music is ambiguous and it is unsurprising that a considerable amount of music that did not meet criteria in serious or popular musics was nonchalantly linked to this category. The main definitions of light in the Oxford Dictionary deal with various forms of illumination: visibility, colour, knowledge and understanding as well as abilities, animation, weighing very little, low in density, gentle, easily done, cheerful, nimble and discovered by chance (2015). It could be that the opposites are the key to the meaning of light in a musical sense in that the music is not dark, serious or heavy. Much of the music sounds as though it has a light touch and is entertaining but this is achieved by considerable thought and craft and is not slight, thrown together or easy to achieve. Derek B. Scott (2004, p. 307) describes light music as a music that 'produces effects and valorizes moods, identities, and ideas that no other music does.' All these definitions are ambiguous but in both Ades and Scott there is the perception that the music has something unique and it is something that could be researched and identified. The music having commercial and entertainment associations but no social milieu could be regarded as one of the reasons it has been neglected by many academics in favour of the more defined high or culturally interesting low brows. There was no particular fashion or political movement associated with the music as it was composed to appeal to as many as possible and it had few, if any, influential supporters. From early in the BBC's

existence light music was used as the alternative or safe option to the more serious music concert broadcasts (Doctor, 1999, pp. 52-53) and the music would have functioned as a musical soundtrack to life rather than music to inspire an emotional response or convey a compelling message. It was rock and pop that took on that role from the 1960s, with the full support of the music industries, and left the moderate and functional light music to find different markets. For the music to be forgotten or mostly disregarded by academics after it held such prominence in the public ear for at least a century could be as a result of prevailing attitudes rather than musical worth. As Sheila Whiteley argued 'If it [popular music] has sufficient musicality in the first place, then it will withstand investigation' (BBC, 2000) and my contention is why not the same amount of investigation, research and analysis for light music?

The position of the music occupying the middle ground between highbrow and lowbrow or serious and trivial may be the reason that light music has had few champions and many detractors. This middle ground needs some explanation especially with the increasing amount of music available and the utilisation of category searches becoming an important element to help the listener find music. Rankings and 'charts' ranging from 'The top 75 funeral songs' (Telegraph, 2015) to the Mariachi charts from soundclick.com (2015) have become an ordinary part of this search process. This has established a far more sophisticated rubric to supersede the high brow, 'Speciality' or other brow 'Universal' (Doctor, 1999, p. 31) system used by the BBC. YouTube has become one of the main channels for music searches in Europe and the USA during this century and as part of the promotion of the videos uploaded to the platform the 'YouTube video discovery system' has been introduced that automatically generates a chart using customer labelling and numbers of views to create various top 10s. There is a 'Light music chart' that was established in 2013 and on my last view in November 2015 contained music from Gracie Fields, Sazankano Yado, Sidney Torch, Leroy Anderson and Eric Coates as examples (YouTube, 2015).

Light music was programmed by the BBC in the 'Universal' category, 'defined as music programmes "which do not require on the part of the listener mental effort for their enjoyment"' and often as an alternative to the "'Speciality" programmes,

requiring “the listener’s co-operation” (Doctor, 1999, p. 31). This ‘Universal’ definition reinforced Adorno’s (2002, p. 458) anti-commercial music arguments explaining it as relegating ‘the listener to a realm of inattention and distraction’. Light music being the wide-ranging label for a very broad middle was tainted by these criticisms whereas my attitude to the music is similar to that of David Ades (1996, p. ix) who succinctly explained it as ‘serious music that is approachable’. The term light music has been superseded by many other names and categories although the ethos of the style has remained and these changes were recognised by Eric Coates as early as the mid 1950s as he reminisced for: ‘...the days when music was not put into categories as it is to-day, or laid out on the operating table for dissection, but was looked upon simply as music to delight and elevate’ (Coates, 1953, p. 206).

Light music has often been scornfully derided for the ‘delight and elevate’ and entertain approach with Jane Thynne’s article in *The Independent* being an example.

If you don't know what light music is, think "Barwick Green", "Sailing By" or Desert Island Discs. It's the music of seaside resorts and the test card. From the 1930s to 1950s, the BBC broadcast light music constantly, and in *Whatever Happened to British Light Music?*, Petroc Trelawny staged a live debate on the not especially pressing question of why it disappeared. (Thynne, 2011)

This type of attitude may be the reason why the term is most commonly used to describe the golden age and why current composers do not use the term when describing their own music. The music mostly disappeared from being an integral part of radio broadcasts in the early 1970s and it repositioned to being a major part of the music output to the test card broadcasts on television until the advent of twenty-four hour programming in 1998 (Stanley, 2012) yet the elements of light music are still evident in many contemporaneous styles of music today.

A review of music dictionaries showed that *The Oxford Dictionary of Music* and *Grove Music Online* have no definition of light music but biographies of some light music composers are included. In the *Grove Music Online* entry regarding English Music, Stephen Banfield includes one sentence,

Light music, a curious token of bustling urban Englishness much promoted by the BBC, often from resort pavilions, in its first three or four decades [of the 20th Century] (Sidney Torch, working with the BBC Concert Orchestra, and Eric Coates its leading exponents). (2015, para. 7)

Another culture's view of the music can be found in a translation from *The Free Dictionary* quoting the Soviet Union's perception of light music.

Along with works of artistic value, there exist a large number of compositions of low quality that are trite and satisfy the tastes of the bourgeois philistine public. (Free Dictionary by Farlex, 2013)

The *Oxford Companion to Music* defines Light as:

An adjective applied loosely (often pejoratively) to music deemed of no great intellectual or emotional depth, intended for light entertainment, and usually for orchestra. There is a large repertory of British light music, much of it witty, imaginative, and skilfully orchestrated, by such composers as Ketèlbey, Coates, Ronald Binge, Robert Farnon, and Gilbert Vinter. Elgar and Britten composed in the genre, which flourished from the 1950s with the expansion of radio broadcasting. Such music is often played by 'light orchestras'. (Latham, 2010)

If a definition of light music is: music with a memorable, and often repeated, melody composed with an outlook to entertain and with some possible commercial significance, then the output of many composers throughout history have included works composed with financial as well as artistic motivation for a mass audience. Accessible music is invariably written with the listener in mind and the Light Music Society (2014) in the UK describe it as '...music with an immediate appeal, music to entertain and enjoy. It has a strong emphasis on melody, and as such, it is designed to appeal to a wider audience than more serious forms of the Western classical music tradition.'

The golden age of light music coincided with and ran parallel to the rise of the modernist aesthetic. This period was also the time of a growing interest in musicology and the romantic style in high art music had reached its peak. Other musical styles that grew in popularity during this hundred year period were parlour songs, impressionism, jazz, swing and what is now termed the American songbook and influences from other musical traditions from colonised

communities all vied for popularity from an increasing audience serviced by developing broadcasting and recording industries. Light music composers included many of these developments in their compositions as they were like magpies collecting the most appropriate musical ideas from any or all styles of music to establish a distinctive and entertaining sound for their compositions.

The contention is that light music continued after the golden age, although not termed as such, and instrumental music was required by medias other than recording. Composition for drama in films, television, radio and more recently video games continues to use melody based instrumental music and technology has meant that the studio, synthesiser and computer have often taken over from recording an orchestra in the studio. Examples of more studio or production based contemporary composers with a light music approach are Vangelis and Brian Eno. Vangelis combines sound effects, synthesisers, rhythm section and orchestral instruments in many of his works mixing rock, electronic, choral and orchestral music styles together that echoes the light music philosophy of using the most appropriate musical material to obtain the required effect. Brian Eno has developed ambient and generative music and uses software to create sections of music before undertaking a listening and selection process that helps decide which music will become part of the final work. The parameters written into the software and his composition sensibilities combine to produce melodic instrumental music. (Eno, 2010)

Light music has survived and evolved to satisfy the changing needs of the concert, broadcast, viewing and gaming audiences for nearly two centuries. During this time the music has remained predominantly instrumental although sounds from the production studio rather than live recordings has become the norm in the twenty-first century, all achieved despite the disapproval of the music establishment as reviewed in the next chapter.

Chapter 2

Blinded by the light: criticism, conflict and rock and roll.

The wars and conflicts at the start of the 20th century shaped a significant change in the social order of the 'West' from dictatorships to the individual meritocracy of recent years (Verhaeghe, 2012). This change affected many of the values and philosophies that had defined culture before the wars. There was disillusionment with what had gone before and an attempt to create a new order by some intellectuals was tempered by others preferring the continuous changes in rock and roll. The parallels with the light music revolution is evident as seen in this article about how the new music:

Rock and roll drew on many different styles. Combining the boogie woogie rhythms of R&B, the hillbilly twang of country, the fervor of gospel and the moans of the blues, the new mongrel music excited a worldwide generation of young listeners, while upsetting established social, cultural and musical authorities. (McGovern, N.D.)

There was a period of debate in serious music after the second world war with 'the desire for artistic renewal, a revision of aesthetic ideals and technical resources...' (Smith Brindle, 1987. p. 3) being at the forefront of many philosophies. Change was inevitable in many artistic disciplines with many arguments and disputes regarding future directions.

This splitting of the musical world into serialists and non-serialists during the first post-war decade was absolute and lasted for some considerable time... Particularly in Western Europe, composers, critics and performers had to become partisans of one camp or the other; to have a foot in both worlds was almost an impossibility. (Smith Brindle, 1987. p. 4)

At the other side of the musical cultural landscape commercial and popular music styles were transformed by the demand of the audience for music that a post-war generation could relate to, the proliferation of affordable radios and record players with business investment in the recording industry helped rock and roll to be at the vanguard of change (Peterson, 1990, p.98).

...the triumph of rock 'n' roll signalled the coming of age of a new generation, one whose norms, culturally, intellectually and politically,

often stood in sharp contrast to those of the generation immediately preceding it. The strength of the rock 'n' roll generation's break with previous attitudes, which first manifested itself musically, would reach full fruition in the social and political upheavals of the sixties. (Welch, 1990, p. 39)

These shifts in attitudes were substantial and much of what had gone before, including light music, was denounced by critics as having little worth, being over sentimental and a depiction of an ideal that never was or most scathingly was not mentioned at all. In 1932 Theodor Adorno wrote contemptuously that operettas, hit songs and vaudeville songs were part of a musical underworld and below that came marches, drinking songs and 'sentimental tunes and ditties for servant girls' (2002, p. 502) and this was aimed at the commercial or popular music of the time that would have included light music. Another influential musicologist of the post-war period Carl Dahlhaus described light music using the German term *trivialmusik* suggesting that it 'must be simple enough to permit easy listening, but not so clichéd as to discourage hearers from listening at all' (In Washburne & Durno, 2004, pp. 312-15). These critical remarks can be interpreted as an attitude of musical superiority and they influenced many academics and musicologists during the post-war years although in the twenty-first century many of their ideas have been shown to have an underlying bias in favour of their preferred music and composers.

The positioning of critics and musicians in one camp against those in another was not just reserved for post WWII modernists or rock and rollers as can be seen from this extract from *Music Ho!*

...Emanuel Chabrier who technically speaking may be considered—far more than Erik Satie—the father of the post-war movement associated with the names of Les Six and the Ecole d'Arceuil. It is impossible to praise too highly the wit, charm and skill of this composer, whose works are still airily dismissed with the label 'light music'. (Lambert, 1934, pp. 194-195)

The transformation in thinking and the ideal of starting after the second world war from a "tabula rasa" was an appealing notion to many artists that had experienced the considerable changes in lifestyle and culture as a result of the conflict although whether it is possible to put aside all that has gone before, 'nature verses nurture', is still being debated at the present time by

psychologists from both sides of the argument. Adams and Carfagna (2006, p.196) so aptly title one section of their book, *Coming of Age in a Globalized World*, 'Nature verses Nurture: Round 7,899,999' in which they argue both philosophies are part of our thought processes.

The aspiration to establish musicology as an academic subject area with the writings of Theodor Adorno and Carl Dahlhaus at the forefront of this movement and the concept of a musical year zero polarised arguments of what should be studied, developed and performed. These developments coupled with the commercialisation of rock and roll and popular music from the mid 1950s left light music occupying a shrinking middle ground. Financial investment was redirected from light music to rock and pop and art music became more intellectual and cerebral.

In the late 1960s, rock music became all-consuming, absorbing and fusing with so many other styles that it eroded the possibility of light music remaining a separate category; in some cases, such as that of the Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, rock came to occupy the space of a popular 'art music' that had formerly been the particular province of light music. (Scott, 2004, p.332)

Dahlhaus described light music as the 'repertoire of dance halls and proms, of salons and varietés.' (cited in Washburne and Durno, 2004, p.335) and wrote judgementally about music that did not fit with his aesthetic ideologies. In a Guardian article from 1972 Hugo Cole described the climate;

In England we are particularly suspicious of any mixing of *genres*: Arnold and Williamson are upbraided for writing entertainment works for the large, uncritical public: they seem to be regarded (absurdly, I think) as having sold out to the enemy. Bernstein's *Candide* Overture and Gershwin's Piano Concerto affronted some serious musicians, whose opinions I respect, when given by Copland at the Albert Hall earlier this month.

It's not simply a question of good or bad music-the context, the style and idiom of performance, and our own attitudes were all involved. The same week, light music by Elgar and Walton's *Façade* were arousing no protests on South Bank. (Cole, 1972, p.8)

Most light music composers worked independently and often on a freelance and commercial basis, many had perfected a signature sound that was one of their selling points and with continuing demands for their music any change to follow

a particular philosophy would not make business sense unless there was a demand for the new music. The development of radio throughout the second world war and the broadcasts of light music were an important element in motivating the nation and raising morale and productivity. They also served as an important source of royalty income for the composers as well as a main way to promote their music. These broadcasts continued during the rebuilding programmes of the immediate post-war years (Reynolds, 2006) and the record industry and related businesses started to grow with the development of new materials for discs coupled with affordable record players.

By the time that the BBC had reorganised in the early 1960s from the *Light Programme* and *Home Service* to *Radios 2, 3 and 4* the term light music had been removed from the programmes and many English light music composers lost their main patron. In the 1963 lecture, *The BBC's Music Policy* given by William Glock as controller of music for the BBC, the music is dismissed without being named.

What we have tried to do, both with the music of the past and with that of the present day, is to make a strong impact, to choose a high percentage of important works, and to limit the number of those secondary and incidental pieces which belong rather to the *Spa* repertory, and which are apt to make faint reading in the *Radio Times* and dull or inanimate listening. (Glock, 1991, p.201)

Ernest Tomlinson in the introduction to *British Light Music* explains the end of light music at the BBC from a composer's perspective.

The surprise was that light music stayed on radio 3 for so long – eg, in 'Matinées Musicales' whose success with listeners over several years (thanks to producer Alan Owen) – and of the living composers performed – was clearly resented. From 1988, when that programme was dropped, it was made perfectly clear to composers that that kind of music was specifically not wanted. (Tomlinson in Scowcroft, 2013, p.12)

The recording industry looked to rock and roll, rock and pop rather than instrumental 'pops' for the volume of sales with radio broadcasting mirroring this trend while supporting the contemporary intellectual or highbrow styles as a way to balance the output. I experienced first hand the restructuring of bands and

orchestras by the BBC in the early 1980s as I was then working as an 'extra' with the *BBC Northern Radio Orchestra* [NRO]. This was a period of uncertainty, industrial action and a final settlement that agreed a five year transition period during which the number of sessions would gradually decrease allowing the opportunity for the ex BBC musicians to secure other employment. At that time the repertoire of the NRO was established with very little new music being commissioned and the weekly sessions were very similar in content to each other. The Musicians Union and the BBC seemed to be in constant negotiation regarding 'needle time', the number of hours of broadcast records allowed, and the mood in the orchestra was often tense due to uncertainty and the prospect of significant change. The golden age middle ground music mainly disappeared from radio after the settlement period had elapsed although to this day BBC Radio 4 still uses light music theme tunes for some programmes: Ronald Binge's *Sailing By*, composed in 1963, for the late night shipping forecast, *By A Sleepy Lagoon* from Eric Coates, written in 1930, introduces *Desert Island Discs* and *Barwick Green* from the suite *My Native Heath* by Arthur Wood, composed in 1924, is the theme to *The Archers*.

It was television with the requirements of programme makers for short and memorable melodic theme tunes that took over as one of the main outlets for the style of music after the reorganisation of radio at the BBC. Light music composers have evolved with the changes in entertainment as new and mainly song based popular music styles appeal to a mass audience and contemporary music is 'shaped by the pluralities and differences of the wider cultural and intellectual landscape of postmodernism' (Beard and Gloag, 2007, p. 145). The term light music almost completely disappeared for a while although is currently enjoying a revival with nostalgic light music concerts becoming more common like those promoted by the *John Wilson Orchestra* (2015) and *Much Loved Productions* (2015).

There were some composers, performers and critics that straddled art, light and rock musics in the late twentieth century such as Malcolm Arnold, Richard Rodney Bennett and Hugo Cole although these musicians were dismissed, marginalised and often regarded with some suspicion. The obituary in *The*

Independent of Hugo Cole dwelt on the amateur nature of some of the performers for his compositions although ended with praise of the man as being 'thoroughly professional in everything he did, whether as performer, composer or writer of music criticism' (Forbes, 1995). With financial security comes criticism as Norman Lebrecht (2011) indicated in the introduction to his interview with Richard Rodney Bennett and Malcolm Arnold's output for serious, light, amateur and film audiences has still to be fully appreciated.

Many light music composers showed enterprising inclinations and were part of developments in publishing, recording, radio, film and television technologies as well as featuring as part of contemporary games and web based medias. The collaborations between composers and the commercial music industry are seen by some as compromising artistic principles and by others as a pragmatic balancing of ideals and these issues are discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 3

There's no business like the music business.

Being a composer in the commercial music environment often calls for music to match the requirements of the paymaster, often the publishers and record companies, rather than creating with the more self-absorbed 'arts for arts sake' philosophy. The early commercial products were in sheet music form and publishers required melodic music that could be adapted for any and many instrumental combinations. The promotion of music to many customers was by way of recognition from concert programmes and transcriptions of the popular melodies of the day were available in sheet music form for home performance. (Ehrlich, 1989, p. 5) This form of promotion diminished as affordable radio and record playing technologies developed and for a time audiences bought both printed music and recordings before eventually transferring to predominantly recordings and nowadays videos of music. Light music composers were present in the vanguard at these times of changes adapting their music to conform with technological developments.

To support their compositional aspirations many light music composers often had another income from more regular employment as the early commercially orientated music scene could not always offer a regular income even with the establishment of the Performing Right Society in the UK during 1914 which according to Cyril Ehrlich (1989, p. 43) did not become 'an effective alliance' until 1926. Some examples of composers and the other roles they managed are: Edward German - violinist, Eric Coates – principal viola in the *Queen's Hall Orchestra*, Ronnie Hazelhurst - trumpeter with various bands, Richard Rodney Bennett – pianist, accompanist and singer, Ernest Tomlinson - organist and copyist and Malcolm Arnold – principal trumpet with the *London Philharmonic Orchestra*. As they were knowledgeable in a number of disciplines they were often treated warily and labelled with the "...sometimes admiring, sometimes ironic, and sometimes contemptuous phrase "Renaissance man," which was applied to almost anyone who manifested an ability to do more than one thing well." (Van Doren 1991).

The light music composers in this century still have to manage a number of jobs and examples are: Sheridan Tongue – keyboard player and programmer, Peter Wraight – trumpeter and teacher and Ty Unwin – keyboard player. In discussions with current composers, arrangers, performers and promoters who are active in a number of musical styles, including light music, they highlighted characteristics that the performing experience infuses in the practitioner. One is a passion for music, often embracing many genres, that disregards the philosophies and methods of construction and has the overriding goal of achieving an exceptional representation. This open approach to music of diverse origins can contribute to the ability of the performer/composer to use an eclectic mixture of music as the basis of a style. The other attributes that came out of these discussions were the professional standards expected from themselves and their colleagues.

These values deal with time management, appearance, collaboration, self-management, musical and financial skills, judgement, expertise and once displayed they result in a mutual respect between colleagues and are also the same values as those needed in business and enterprise. This image of the composer is very different to an art music Romantic notion of the lone creator toiling for days in solitude or the sex, drugs and rock and roll existence of someone in the commercial music sphere although I have seen aspects of all these lifestyles during my career.

Enterprising composers often work to the requests or suggestions of employers or commissioners, publishers and record companies, who require music for their catalogues or products. The early recordings on 78s were only six minutes long which precluded much of the symphonic repertoire from fitting on one disk and shorter works were required by record companies during this period and the light music composers tailored their works to fit the medium. Often the commercial composer was required to create music that would compliment the technology and the more enterprising musicians would use their networks, contacts and work situations to advance their compositions.

In his autobiography *Suite in Four Movements* Eric Coates explains the enterprising way in which one of his most well used compositions, the 'Knightsbridge March' from the *London Suite*, was recorded. He had been asked by the Columbia Company to produce some song transcriptions for a recording and took the score and parts of the suite to the engagement speculating that there would be time at the end of the morning session to record the music. He managed to get a recording on the day and the next stages in the process were negotiations with publishing and recording companies to release the suite. The chance use as the signature tune to *In Town To-night* on the radio was followed by various adaptations by the publishers for 'orchestras large and small; brass bands; military bands; dance bands; barrel organs; fairground organs; mechanical pianos, pianolas; accordions; even electric penny-in-the-slot pianos...' (Coates 1953 pp. 218-220) all with the common 15/85, or at the most 20/80, retail price division between composer and publisher. The durations of the movements in the Coates recording of the *London Suite* allocate the first two movements on one side and movement three, the 'Knightsbridge March', on the other side of the 78 rpm record. Andrew Blake explains the limitations of the early recording technology.

Apart from Italian opera arias, the classical repertoire was at that time [early-twentieth-century] difficult to record: alongside problems of balance for orchestral works (partly solved from the 1920s by the use of electric microphones and multichannel mixing) were those of length, the maximum playing time on one side of a twelve-inch 78 rpm record being six minutes – too little for most sonata-form movements even without the repeated exposition. (2004, p. 489)

Some of the developments and use of technology during the past two decades, and in some cases their misuse, have been influential in altering opinions of copyright and especially music copyright. New digital businesses have been established that often use copyright music without permission and do not inform the copyright holder it is being used. 'In the digital marketplace, everyone seems to have found a way to make a living off music except the creators who actually record the songs' (Burnett, 2015). The 2015 music audience in the United States divided their purchases almost equally between live and recorded or streamed music as evidenced by the *2015 Nielsen Music Report* (Nielsen, 2016 p. 27) with one of the polls indicating that '78% would be somewhat/very

unlikely to stream music in the next six months' with 'they are too expensive' and 'I can stream music for free' as the top two reasons for not subscribing. This culture of expecting music for personal use to be free has had the effect of reducing the sales and/or license income for publishers and record companies and consequently commercial investment in much new music is generally much lower than it was pre digital. The post-digital benefits are mainly in the production and distribution areas where in many cases costs have reduced due to the manufacture of software and hardware for a consumer, rather than specialist, market. Worldwide distribution using channels like YouTube, Facebook, iTunes and many others is now the norm and the home production and publishing of music is available to anyone with access to a computer. For the commercial, including light music, composer these resources now make progressing the music to market a far more simple process than in the pre home studio eras when performers and studios, distributors and publishers all had to be engaged before any music could be completed. The effect of this open market is that many more composers are now promoting their work and the competition has greatly increased. The following figures are an example of the extent of this increase in online distribution from one specialist 'electronic music and culture' (Beatport, 2015) online music store as reported in the *Association of Independent Music Journal*.

In 2011 there were on average between 7,000 and 15,000 new releases a week on Beatport alone. In the late 90s there were approximately 10 main record distributors and each would release 10 – 15 new titles a week; that's between 100 – 150 releases! (Gaskill, 2012)

Other online distribution service platforms include iTunes, Amazon, Mp3.com, Bandcamp, Soundcloud and Jamendo with variations in pricing policy from free or 'donate what you wish' to a scale of charges that are stated by the hosting company. The statistics offer an insight into how the record industry has changed in a short period of time from being controlled and regulated into a more open marketplace with a number of consequences for the commercial composer. The iTunes music home page promotes the fact that it has over forty-three million songs to access (apple.com, 2015) which, at a conservative

estimate of three minutes per song, gives one person over 245 years of constant listening.

Together with the developments in the release and distribution of music there has been a political strategy to industrialise the creative sectors and an increase in combined creative and business courses in universities. The first mention of 'creative industries' was during the period of New Labour (Humphreys, 2000, p. 221) and this label has continued to be part of subsequent government business initiatives. The recent Institute for Public Policy Research report *March of the Modern Makers* suggests that 'An industrial strategy for the creative industries should therefore be centred upon a set of policies and interventions that maximise opportunities to create great content and to exploit it both at home and abroad' (Straw and Warner, 2014). The creative artist becoming a business and then part of an industry can be a difficult subject to discuss for many when 'we tend to think of "art" and "business" as mutually exclusive – and have double (or even triple) standards about what artists are and are not allowed to say about their money and still be considered artists.' (Palmer, 2014). For the light music composer most of these concerns have already been considered with strategies to incorporate a consensus between music and commerce firmly part of the composer's philosophy. Although the creative industries are regularly cited by politicians as a growth area, in reports like the *Creative Industries: Focus on Employment* from June 2015 or the *Creative Industries Economic Estimates* from January of the same year both produced by the UK Department for Media and Sport, the impact of individual musical styles let alone individual composers is still too difficult to ascertain from the data.

Generally the investment from record companies in new music is diminishing as income from music is affected by third party distribution platforms such as iTunes and the expectation of many consumers that music is free. The use of the internet and particularly the sharing of data with a disregard for copyright in music became impossible to regulate with the interests of individual countries always taking precedent over a common goal and by the time that the harm it was causing certain businesses was acknowledged the culture of downloading music for free was already established and new businesses that profited from

the lack of clarity regarding online music copyright expanded. These events have led to the current situation that Jason Hirschhorn, the former MySpace co-president and now CEO of ReDEFind, wrote about in the introduction to a recent review of the music business.

Artists finally have direct connections to their audiences, but they must fight through more noise than ever before. Distribution is no longer constrained by shelf space or A&R men, but a stream or download generates royalties many artists decry as untenable. Audiences can now enjoy more music, more easily and in more places – yet the amount they spend is at an unprecedented low. (Hirschhorn, 2015, para. 1)

The development of new media products such as games, corporate videos and websites with the expansion of twenty-four hour television channels have sustained a demand for music. The light music composer is far more likely to be in the recording studio, often their own studio, than on a concert platform that can be stimulating with the many choices of sounds available from software but can also detach the composer from collaborations with other musicians.

To try to gauge how the composition business has developed recently, and see if there are any references to light music, I reviewed the more business orientated social media platform LinkedIn. From a sample of approximately four thousand four hundred mostly music associated LinkedIn connections only 10% included composer or composition in their professional headline. Of this sample 26% just use the title composer, 35% have composer with some teaching title, 28% include instrumental performance with composition and 11% include composition, performance and teaching as their job description. From these figures it is evident that composition is still part of a portfolio career with Christopher Fox explaining the academic focus to the changes in the business of composition as:

The days of the career-composer, living entirely from commissions and royalties, are over, certainly for anyone who wants to create anything other than mainstream classical music... Indeed university music departments now employ so many composers, sound artists and performers that they may well be new music's principal sponsors. (Fox, 2015 [2])

With this change of patronage comes another set of requirements for the composer: research and securing funding for research tasks followed by performance or publication on an international stage. The topics, relevance and 'value' of the research, measured by their peers, may also be a reason why light music has not developed as an academic subject area as effectively as jazz and popular music although I hope to have shown that there is a large area of research yet to be undertaken in this area. That such a significant output of music could be quietly forgotten and mostly excluded from musical studies of the past two hundred years is injudicious and there is an urgent need to collect the first hand information from the generations that were part of the golden age before it is too late.

Chapter 4

So deep is the light: melodic, meticulous and moody.

The following sections investigate the mix of musical characteristics identified as representing the unique essence of light music. To some practitioners the title should be melodic, melodious and melody as Ernest Tomlinson described ‘the tune is more important than what you do with it’ (Tomlinson in Scowcroft, 2013). The analysis concentrates on three main areas: melody, orchestration and mood as composers were often commissioned to create music for specific events or to elicit a certain ambiance for the listener with orchestrations that were often individual and sometimes innovative. My compositions detailed in chapter 6 also include rhythm as an important element and this additional musical feature relates to my interpretation of light music for the twenty-first century.

The analysis in this chapter includes a few musical examples from an oeuvre of very many and the music examined is not limited to any particular composer or group of composers although some names do appear more than once. The samples represent music covering the period from the golden age, starting in the late nineteenth-century, to some recent twenty-first century examples that illustrate many similarities throughout. All the transcriptions are my own.

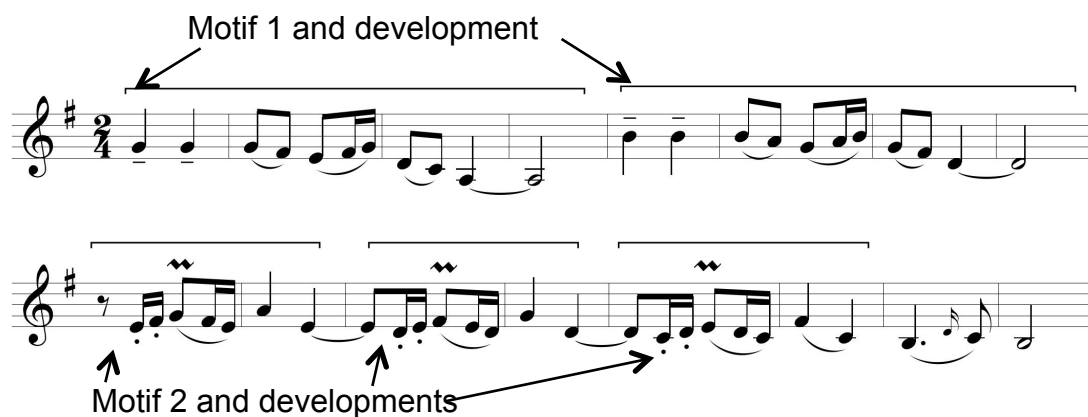
Melody

Melody, and an instrumental melody, was and still is the most important aspect of light music. The structure of the music, the sounds performing and accompanying the melody and the mood imagined and created during the music all being secondary considerations to the principal that the melody is the most significant attribute of the style. Much of the music has memorable and often instantly appealing melodies that use short, motif-like, ideas that are often repeated with rhythmic and/or sequential developments. In the music from the golden age period a second phrase, often with a contrasting melodic motif and developments, was frequently used to complete the melody. The tunes typically lasted eight, sixteen, twenty-four or thirty-two bars as these were recognised phrase lengths from many common musical styles. The following examples

demonstrate how these techniques were utilised and reveal how this melodic use is currently being used in this century.

The main theme from *Chanson de Matin* by Edward Elgar (1899) has two motifs, both are developed using a sequential method that changes the register yet keeps the exact shape in a diatonic fashion. The melody has a total duration of twenty-four bars with the final part of the melody being another development of the 1st motif with the mordent from motif 2 defining the end.

Figure 4. 1. Elgar, E. W. (1899). *Chanson de Matin*. London: Novello & Co..



The Rondo from Malcolm Arnold's *Little Suite for Brass* (1963) again has sequential developments of both motifs and rhythmic development in bar 3.

Figure 4. 2. Arnold, M. (1963). *Little suite for brass no.1*. London: Novello & Co..

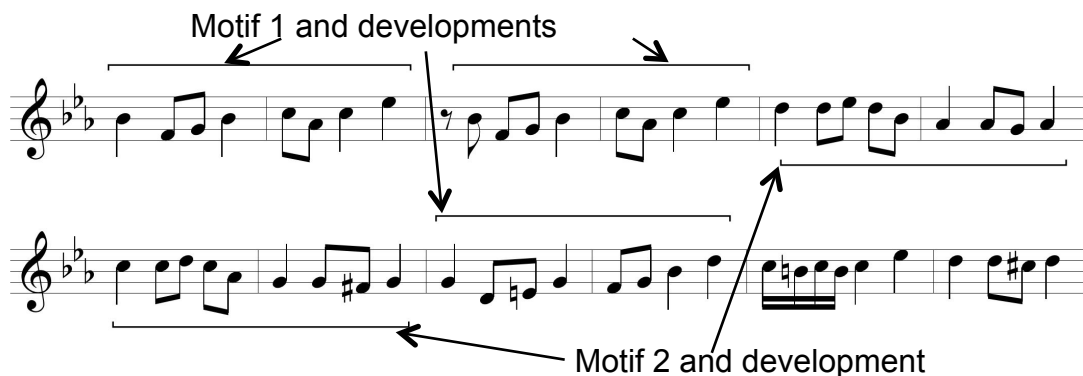
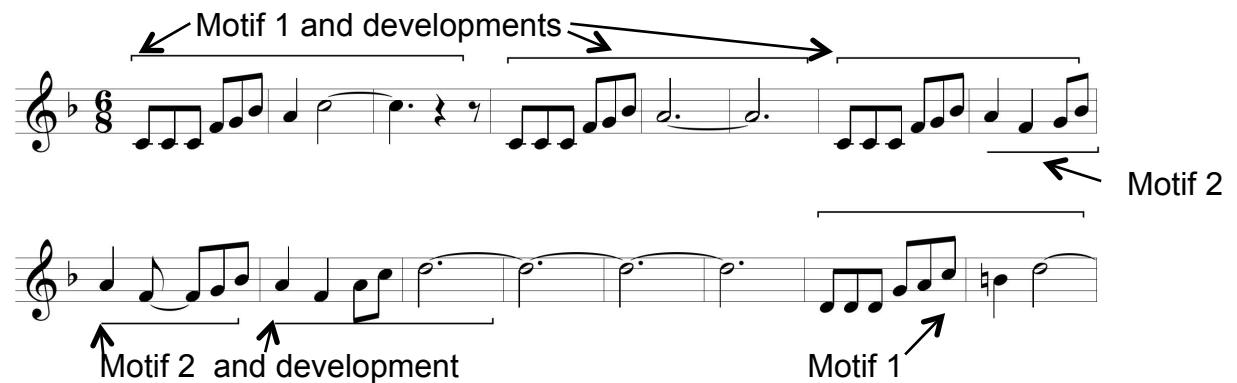


Figure 4. 3. is part of the theme tune to the film *633 Squadron* composed by Ron Goodwin (1964) and takes inspiration from the squadron name with alternating six and three rhythmic ideas. After the six quaver statement in bars 1, 4 and 7 the melody is developed differently and the sequential idea is used in

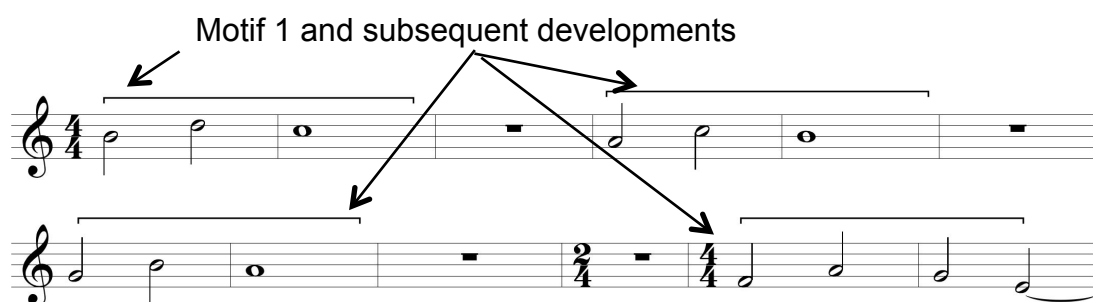
blocks of tonality beginning in F major with a second section at bar 15 in G major and then the following section with new melodic material, not included in the example, following in E major.

Figure 4. 3. Goodwin, R. (1964). *633 squadron*. London: United Artists Music Ltd..



The sequential method of repeating the intervals of the melody highlights the motif in the mind of the audience with the transpositions and subtle thematic developments giving the music some interest but without too much inherent distraction. These melodic devices are important to many twenty-first century composers as shown in the melody from the title track of the album *Small Craft on a Milk Sea* by Brian Eno (2010, Track 3).

Figure 4. 4. Eno, B. (2010). *Small craft on a milk sea*. On *Small craft on a milk sea*. [CD and Digital]. London: Warp.



Each sequential repeat of the motif has slightly different intervals: minor 3rd tone, minor 3rd semitone, major 3rd tone and the final major 3rd tone plus an extra note and these subtle changes set an interesting, and entertaining, yet familiar tone to the music which is one of the key elements to the main melodic content in light music.

In the light music style many of the melodies establish a tonality during the first few bars before moving to a new, and often not related, tonality for a following sequential section or sections. The next example is taken from *Sinfonietta* by Ernest Tomlinson (1992) and shows the melodic development during three sections of the work between sections 23 and 26 in the score.

Figure 4. 5. Tomlinson, E. (1992). *Sinfonietta*. Preston: Electrophonic Music Co..



The use of two bar sequences is obvious in the first four bars of each section and the final bars of the melody show developments each time. The changes in harmony are rarely prepared by harmonic means in terms of pivot chords as the modulations are achieved by using common notes in the chords to facilitate the harmonic changes. The two bars at the start of section 23 are in A minor and the melody in bar three of the section is in D major, bar four in D minor using A as a common note throughout. Similarly the bar before section 25 is in D minor with the first bar at 25 in B^b major with D and F being the common notes.

Without interviewing the composer it is difficult to define what influenced the use of the harmonic changes for each section although a common orchestration technique employed by many light music composers is that instruments are

utilised in their most sonorous and effective registers. The melody in section 23 is scored for violins, section 24 is scored with flute and piccolo taking the lead and for section 25 the brass (trumpets and horns) have the melody. The keys of each section and the instruments performing the sections are written with regard to the qualities of the instruments, in appropriate registers for an effective performance with limited rehearsal time, and further analysis of these techniques are discussed in the next section.

Orchestration

Distinctive instrumental timbres created by unusual combinations of sounds in an innovative manner plays an important part in creating interest during many light music works. The duration of many of these compositions were/are generally short, as required by the commercial users of the music, yet include detailed changes of textures throughout which are an important characteristic of the music. This attention to detail is often found in serious music but is rarely a part of rock and popular music although I have noticed some similar sophistication in the works of orchestrator Larry Baird for *The Moody Blues*, producer Quincy Jones with Michael Jackson and in much of the music by Stevie Wonder although equivalent UK popular music examples are not as readily identifiable.

Many of the light music composers supplemented their incomes by arranging and orchestrating for other artists, band-leaders, record companies and radio and television companies as 'staff' or 'house' arrangers. This employment gave many of these musicians an expert understanding of orchestral instruments and this knowledge was often incorporated into their own works. A common technique in the compositions was to restate the established melodic idea in a different key to create a contrasting section. This section could be for a solo instrument or groups of instruments and the choice of tonality for these sections was often dictated by the resources/instruments available at the recording or broadcast with the melody orchestrated in the most suitable register on the specific instrument(s).

The opening theme from the Canzonet, figure 4. 6., is orchestrated using muted strings and in the second example, figure 4. 7., the orchestration is for oboe solo and at letter G the strings return to perform the melody without mutes.

Figure 4. 6. Tomlinson, E. (1957). Canzonet from *Silverthorn Suite*. London: Arcadia.



Figure 4. 7. Tomlinson, E. (1957). Canzonet from *Silverthorn Suite*. London: Arcadia.



The melody at letter F is an exact copy of the string theme from the opening, transposed up a major 3rd, and uses a common note modulation at the end of the section to return to the original key. With the melody being the most significant element in the music the harmony is often a secondary consideration and used to create moods such as happiness, sadness, tranquillity, excitement or melancholy without encroaching on the all important tune.

The individual use of instrumental combinations coupled with personal use of certain techniques, including the use of harmony, often gave composers a recognisable musical signature some of which are analysed here. In figure 4. 8. *Sailing By* composed by Ronald Binge the unison strings melody of violins, violas and cellos is accompanied by a vibraphone sounding the chord at each change. This straightforward musical statement is accompanied by a wave shaped arpeggio figure from the flute and clarinet that is treated with reverb giving the effect of the notes merging with one another. The five notes in the

arpeggios were carefully chosen, adding the sixth and ninth notes to the major triad and the ninth to the dominant seventh chord, so as not to create any clashes from adjoining semitones that would alter the generally calm ambience of the music.

Ronald Binge and bandleader Mantovani are credited with creating the 'cascading strings' effect that became the signature sound of the Mantovani's orchestra in the 1950s (Scowcroft, 2013, p. 28) and in *Sailing By* Binge transfers the cascade concept to the woodwind using production techniques to manufacture a similar effect.

Figure 4. 8. Binge, R. (1965). *Sailing By*. Reading: Mozart Edition (Great Britain) Ltd..

Flute and clarinet

Strings

D

A7

G

A7

Motif 1 and development

Motif 2 and development

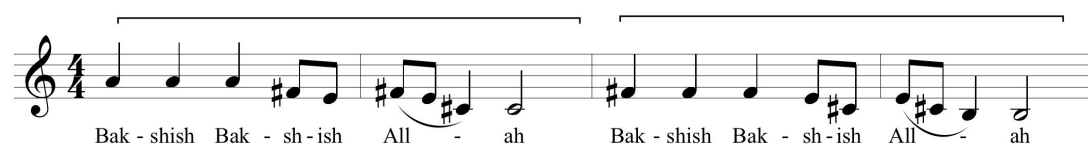
The original cascade was created by dividing the string section into many parts with some of the players sustaining the individual melody notes while others completed the melody creating the effect of a long reverb or carillon. One of the most famous examples is Binge's arrangement of the Rapée and Pollack song 'Charmaine' on the *Waltzing with Mantovani* LP (1951).

Eric Coates uses percussion sounds as part of his instrumental signature with tambourine, glockenspiel or triangle reinforcing the syncopated, but not overtly jazzy, rhythmic ideas he incorporated in the music. As well as integrating the percussion into the ensemble Coates often used them as solo sounds and examples of this can be found in *The Dam Busters March* (1955) where triangle

and glockenspiel punctuate the melody signifying the end of each musical phrase, almost like the bell on a typewriter as it reaches the end of a line. In the 'Knightsbridge March' (1933) the solo bass drum fills the void between the melody and fanfare sections of the music when the sections are restated towards the end of the work and during the *Three Bears Phantasy* (1926) the woodblock is used narratively for a knock on the door effect and later in the work quiet solo block and rims are used to define the syncopated rhythms in the fugal section. This method of changing the quality of sound using percussion is an example of how Coates used meticulous orchestration to maintain audience interest in the music and coupled with his used of syncopated rhythm also created his individual recognisable sound.

Another light music composer with a recognisable instrumental signature was Albert Ketèlbey who used various musical effects in many of his works to evoke appropriate images. *In a Monastery Garden* (1915) incorporates bird calls/decoy whistles and the figure 4. 9. example is from *In a Persian Market* (1920) that includes tom toms and chanting by the orchestra as well as the harmonic device of a bare perfect 5th during the introduction to create an 'oriental' sound. Much of Ketèlbey's music was written to accompany silent films and as such had to be flexible enough to be able to be performed by any instrumentation from solo piano to full orchestra and it is the full orchestra versions that are being considered in this analysis.

Figure 4. 9. Ketèlbey, A. (1920). *In a Persian market*. London: Bosworth & Co. Ltd.



Business and budgets affected the scope of sounds available during the early years of television and the light music composers employed for this medium had to show ingenuity and resolve to achieve their required sound. Ronnie Hazlehurst used to recount the trouble he had in persuading the BBC to employ a second piccolo player on the session for the *Some Mothers Do 'Ave 'Em* theme and the ensemble that performed the music for the many series of *Last of the Summer Wine* was a twelve strong chamber group rather than full orchestra.

Hazlehurst also included sound effects in some of his theme tunes such as the cash register in the theme to *Are You Being Served* although in most of the music it was innovative use of instrumental combinations that became his distinctive musical signature. Examples such as harmonica and string quartet in *Last of the Summer Wine*, the two piccolos of *Some Mothers Do 'Ave 'Em*, flutes and French horn for the *The Fall and Rise of Reginald Perrin* theme and big band, strings, wah-wah guitar and tubular bells in *The Two Ronnies* theme all performed by groups of musicians in the studio.

As the studio, and especially the digital studio, became more accessible to composers and the commercial pressures of cost and competitive pricing become more prevalent in the media industries the individual studio musician: composer, performer and engineer, has become more the norm for a twenty-first century light music composer. This trend started during the 1990s, with Aphex Twin and Vangelis being two examples from that period, and has continued to the present day with Brian Eno and Sheridan Tongue as contemporary examples.

The studio compositions on the 1995 Vangelis album *Voices* (Atlantic, 1995) exploit a mix of synthetic and treated acoustic instrumental sound sources to produce an individual 'signature' to the overall sound. The following example in figure 4. 10. is transcribed from the fifth track on the album 'Ask the Mountains' and is taken from the point in the music where the drums first enter at 2'27" in the 7'53" composition. All the sounds on the album have been enhanced and altered in the studio yet most are recognisable apart from what I have described as synthetic howls that could be based on a human whistle or some animal howl recordings.

The use of pre-set synthetic sounds and the production techniques in the work are typical of other recordings of the era. They allowed composers to work quickly with a collection of sounds although these sounds were often superseded by a new set as the next model of synthesiser was manufactured. The harmony used is triadic and the drum rhythm and static bass denote pop music influences but the use of the 'howls' and treated female voice gives the orchestration a distinctive essence. Vangelis has written the music to a number

of films and even though this album was not based on any visual narrative it was used later with media for a nature documentary series and parts of songs accompanied adverts for the Ariston white goods range.

Figure 4. 10. Vangelis. (1995). Ask the mountains. On *Voices*. [CD and digital]. New York: Atlantic.

Slow ♩ = 60

Voice

Synthetic howls

Piano

Synthesizer

Electric Bass

Drum Kit

Voc

Howls

Pno.

Synth

E.B.

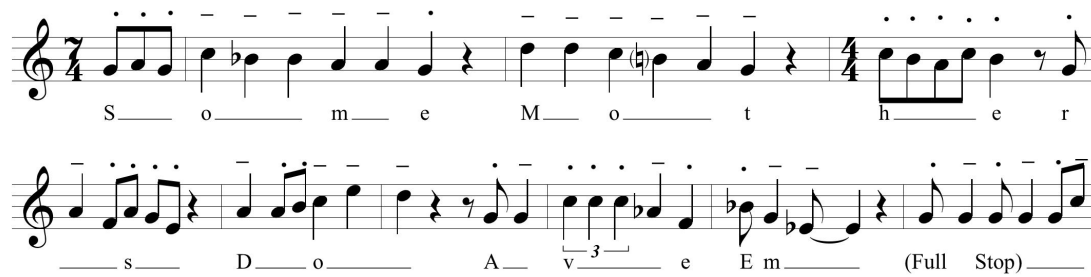
Kit

Moods

Much of the music composed by light music composers evokes an emotion and creates a mood, this was an important part of the appeal of the music and made the works entertaining. The original light music from Vienna was mainly dance music with Joseph Lanner and Strauss Sr. being the main exponents of a music that 'mixed traditional and classical styles in a new, exhilarating, rhythmic, and entertaining manner' (Scott, 2008, p. 85). Most of the dance and concert music from that early period has a positive quality to it and as the requirements of the commercial music market changed so the features of the music evolved. By the time that radio had become established during the war years a positive and morale boosting tone was needed from the music and later television required a different character as 'light music found a place as theme tunes, interval music and accompaniment for test-card transmissions'. (Negus, 2006, p. 312) Negus (2006, p. 329) also identified that contemporary television programmes are using 'a type of ambient light music, associated with artists such as Brian Eno, Aphex Twin, Moby and Air... to enhance or add sonic momentum to visually predictable programmes...' The light music composer communicating the witty and positive has developed into someone who can make the expected interesting and is also required to create music for moving, poignant or disturbing scenes. That many composers have adapted their music to the needs of the market is predictable during unstable financial periods and as the boundaries between musics become more blurred and the media for television, film, gaming and the web become interchangeable the evolution of composition to match demands will continue.

In the first example in this section the mood is positive as Ronnie Hazlehurst's theme tune for *Some Mothers Do 'Ave 'Em* (1973) spells out the programme title in Morse Code and the jaunty whistling nature of the theme, performed by two piccolos, creates a sense of someone without a care in the world. In the example, figure 4. 11., the dots and dashes above the stave are the Morse Code signs with the corresponding letters below.

Figure 4. 11. Hazlehurst, R. (1973). *Some mothers do 'ave 'em*. London, BBC.



The twenty-first century light music composer is sometimes required to create more melancholic and sinister moods which Sheridan Tongue's title music to *DCI Banks* (2010) series, figure 4. 12., is a typical example. Tongue uses a simple metronomic acoustic guitar figure with the melancholic solo trumpet theme, deep but distant drum interjections and wailing/screeching synthetic sounds.

Figure 4. 12. Tongue, S. (2010). *DCI Banks theme*. London, Left Bank Pictures.

Wail - mixture of human voice and bird screech

Most of the sounds from this example are produced synthetically in the studio apart from the solo trumpet and the imagery of an individual struggling with the world is evident throughout the series.

An example of how the combination of styles can create a number of expectations can be heard in Richard Rodney Bennett's music for *Murder on the Orient Express* (1974) that uses the juxtaposition of a late nineteenth/early twentieth century 'romantic' piano concerto style with a piano led café band theme. In the title music, the excitement of the concerto style contrasts with the sophisticated but relaxed dance music to evoke a period in history as well as some dramatic tension.

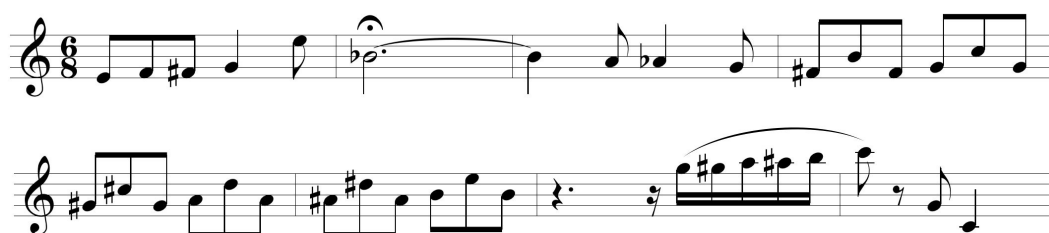
Other composers have developed a tried and tested mood provoking effect as the next examples document. The trail starts with figure 4.13. that shows the introduction and first theme to Robert Farnon's *Jumping Bean* (1947) with the repeated tritone figure leading to a non-diatonic 6/8 'bouncy' melody with chromatic interludes over a metronomic two-beat rhythmic pulse. The music does not settle in any key for long and the two-beat rhythm gives momentum to the music. The emotion created is not disturbing but is inherently humorous.

Figure 4. 13. Farnon, R. (1948). *Jumping bean*. London, Chappell.



This composition was very influential with a number of well-known works using very similar patterns for comedic effect. Wally Stott's (Angela Morley's) theme, figure 4. 14., for *Hancock's Half-hour* (BBC, 1956) uses obvious elements from Farnon's music such as the 6/8 rhythm, prominent tritone, chromatic runs and non-diatonic melody.

Figure 4. 14. Morley, A. (1956). *Hancock's half-hour theme*. London: BBC.



Ivor Slaney's theme in figure 4.15. from *Men From The Ministry* (1962) again has similar rhythms, pronounced tritone and abrupt changes of tonality.

Figure 4. 15. Slaney, I. (1962). *Men from the ministry theme*. London: BBC.



More recent examples of this influence can be found in music for children's cartoons such as the *Mr Benn* theme (1971) composed by Duncan Lamont, figure 4. 16., which has a non diatonic melody and tritone reference between the Bb major tonality in bar 2 and the E natural note in bar 3 which is then inverted and repeated in the following two bars.

Figure 4. 16. Lamont, D. (1971). *Mr. Benn theme*. London: BBC



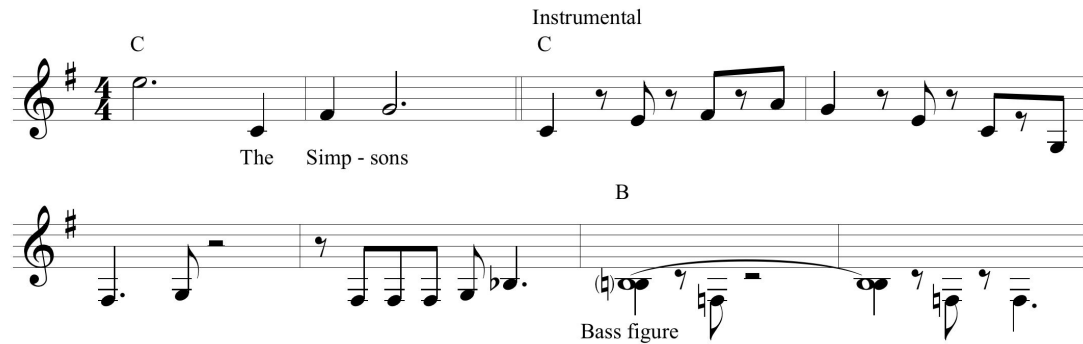
The *Roobarb* (1974) theme by Johnny Hawksworth shown in figure 4. 17. again uses a non diatonic melody, tritone in bar 3 and eventually cadences in D-flat major.

4. 17. Hawksworth, J. (1974). *The Roobarb theme*. London: BBC.



Danny Elfman's theme to *The Simpsons* (1989), figure 4. 18., uses the lydian dominant scale, the major scale with a raised 4th and flattened 7th, which has two tritone intervals, tonic to #4th and 3rd to b7th. The opening chorus pays a brief homage to Leonard Bernstein's 'Maria' from *West Side Story* before the semitone shifts of harmony and tritone use in the melody and bass create an uncertain and comical emotional inclination.

Figure 4. 18. Elfman, D. (1989). *The Simpsons theme*. Los Angeles: Gracie Films.



Many of the light music composers gave their music descriptive titles that could help the concert going audience imagine the scene or mood that was envisaged as the music was being written. During the golden age many of the works that became synonymous with long-running broadcast series were resourcefully recorded and titled prior to any interest from programme makers, similar to the production of library music or production music recordings that are commonplace today. In the production/library music context the publisher is careful to suggest how the music could be included in media by specific titling and dramatic or thematic descriptions.

Some examples of music that was created and titled before becoming attached to particular programmes are the 'Knightsbridge March' and *By A Sleepy Lagoon* by Eric Coates used as the signature tunes to *In Town Tonight* and *Desert Island Discs* respectively and Robert Farnon's *Jumping Bean* which was used as the theme to *Journey into Melody* and *Melody Hour*. As discussed earlier in the thesis the business of categorising and titling music has now become a very important marketing exercise and often how the title correlates with and promotes the music is an important factor and I doubt these days whether a tune with 'Jumping Bean' as the title would ever be considered as appropriate for a programme devoted to melody.

Chapter 5

Where next for light music?

Light music has invariably been criticised for both being in the middle and for being commercial and I hope to have shown how these two elements were mostly influenced by external social and industrial stimuli. So far as the compositions are written with some commercial gain and a consideration of entertainment then the music can be regarded as being written for its time and often but not always for a functional purpose. Taking these factors into consideration many light music works should be past their usefulness in the twenty-first century but they are still an important part of many cultures. This may be because of a comforting familiarity or another reading could be that they have stood the test of time to become seminal works. Lebrecht's comment that 'classical oligarchs sniff at those who make popular money' (2011) coupled with Macan's (1997, p. 176) observation regarding critics and academic musicologists' that 'both suppose that a musical style (or an individual performer) is somehow automatically contaminated by mass popularity' reveal a climate of hostility to commercialism in music which in my opinion exhibits an unrealistic understanding of how creative individuals could exploit their intellectual property in order to be able to produce work on their own terms. This autonomy could certainly be the aspiration of many creative artists.

One of the main qualities displayed by many light music composers is enterprise with the ability to recognise the requirements of a commercial market and create music for the market conditions. Listed are some examples which span a number of centuries and could be regarded as composition aimed at a commercial market: *Music for the Royal Fireworks* and the *Water Music Suites* by Handel, the *Hungarian Dances* by Johannes Brahms and the number of *Pomp and Circumstance* marches by Elgar. The phrase 'being at the forefront of innovation' is now used by many businesses to advocate enterprising behaviour and many light music composers have shown and still show this attitude. The prevalence of light music, with a duration of less than seven minutes, in the early part of the twentieth century was influenced by recording

technology and what could be fitted on the 78rpm disk with an example described in the recording of the London Suite. The signature sound of Mantovani created by Ronald Binge was in part an experiment in stereo recording by the record company Decca and Vangelis, with the creation of synthetic sounds, and Eno, with the use of software to generate music, developed the recording/production studio as a compositional tool. With different commercial and enterprising influences on the music throughout the centuries the styles of music change, evolve or in some cases are radically different but the fundamental qualities of melody and skilful use of orchestration and/or sound remain the primary constituents in music to appeal to an audience.

Will critics and academics accept light music as they have embraced jazz, film, world musics, popular culture as well as studio production and recording? I am still not certain of the outcome although the demarcations dividing musical styles are becoming more blurred according to some writers.

For the boundaries separating contemporary art music from established forms of popular music, which is evolving at an increasingly dizzying pace, and conversely those separating popular music from contemporary music, are becoming more and more blurred. The former lines of demarcation are rapidly vanishing, so that the spectrum of what can be termed 'contemporary music' will continue to expand in the future. (Fricke, 2011, p. 170).

Another view is one of fear for the European, and especially classical, music heritage as commercialisation and according to Hewett (2003, p. 257) a 'global music' expands to take over the world destroying 'all the traditional meanings and memories and forms of life it finds in its path.' This opinion sounds familiar and recalls a time when it was light and popular music rather than 'global music' that threatened serious music and Adorno wrote disapprovingly about any music that endangered the existence of what was to him was 'good serious music'

That music created with commercial acumen should be recognised as an area for academic study, rather than the culture that surrounded its creation, may be too much of a change in ideology or seen as too much of a threat for many in the music establishment but I am not despondent. In conversations I have had with practicing musicians there are very few, if any, musics that are treated lightly or once performed forgotten about. The professionalism and commitment

for all music, be it Sullivan or Stravinsky, Coates or Cage, is evident throughout the music profession reinforced by the conviction from all types of musicians that the composer wrote conscientiously and their creation should be treated with respect. In *The Changing Face of Music* Hugo Cole describes the decline of light music as it were the death of a relative (1978, p.101) with a period of 'uncertainty and readjustment among all who were ever near.' Cole's description deals with the golden age when light music was very prominent in all the medias of the time and the period of change after WWII when a new audience wanted different styles meant difficult adjustments for those that had been part of the prosperous light music filled years. From a more serious perspective Reginald Smith Brindle in the second, 1987, edition of *The New Music* concluded that 'there has been a reaction against increasing cerebralism and complexity. There has been a turning back towards more conventional musical factors, a re-evaluation of melody, harmony, and metrical pulse,...' (Smith Brindle, 1987, p. 189). This could have signalled a possible reprieve for light music with Cole's analysis stating that 'light and serious music sprang from common roots. They served different audiences and different purposes, but their realms were interconnected...' (Cole, 1978, p.101) but the suspicion of music that makes money was too strong for any reconciliation and perhaps this wariness still exists.

At present the term light music is associated with the music from the golden age and the programmes from recent light music concerts are mainly nostalgic filled with well-known music from the period. An example of this type of programming was evident from the 2013 BBC *Prom 24: British Light Music* (BBC, 2015 [2]) that featured music by Granville Bantock, Edward Elgar, Malcolm Arnold, Eric Coates, William Walton and a medley arranged by Gordon Langford with all the music composed between 1909 and 1964. The film music programme from the same year (BBC, 2015 [3]) included similar and more contemporary light music by William Alwyn, William Walton, Richard Rodney Bennett, Leighton Lucas, Richard Addinsell, Richard Strauss, Johann Strauss, John Williams, Michael Giacchino, David Arnold and Jerry Goldsmith that spanned the period between 1941 and 2013 although *An der schönen blauen Donau* (1866) and *Also Sprach Zarathustra* (1896) were earlier but relate to the film use in the 1968 film *2001: A*

Space Odyssey. That a film music concert has a mix of melodious well orchestrated mood music and includes a variety of styles and eras with the remit to entertain the audience, sounds like a light music concept in a different wrapper.

Melody, and memorable melodies, never disappeared from adverts, theme tunes and video games and are part of many contemporary composers' palette of techniques. Smith Brindle was prophetic in that in the twenty-first century there are memorable melodies, metrical pulses and simple harmony as well as continued complexity and cerebralism as the varied output of different art music composers becomes accepted as part of the creative mix. One of a new generation of studio based light music composers/producers is Michael Fesser who creates and publishes his music using the YouTube channel *relaxdaily* and as of December 2015 had over thirty million views and over three hundred thousand subscribers listening to his melodic music with a pulse. Many of his works use the term light in the title such as *Light Instrumental Music – easy, relaxing, background – Season 4* and *Beautiful Light Music – easy, smooth, inspirational – long playlist by relaxdaily: Ocean Breeze* (Fesser, 2015).

Styles of music have evolved with cerebral, experimental, technological and commercial influences and light music has been part of this diverse music scene for over two hundred years. I have no doubt that the music is resilient and adaptable enough to last for many hundreds more and that its significance will be the subject of further scholarly research in the future whatever terms are used to describe it.

Chapter 6

21st century digital man: the portfolio of compositions.

Sounds and music are, and have been, a constant in my life as far back as I can remember and one of my life goals is to experience as many different environments and musics as possible. Whether that be through travel and listening to the different sounds of the countryside, villages, towns, cities and countries, studying and performing many different styles of music as well as attending concerts of amateur through to professional music making. It is only recently that I have realised that this inclusive and eclectic approach to sound and music is not shared by everyone but is often found in people that have music as their vocation. In my discussions with professional composers, arrangers, performers and promoters the passion they have for music is immediately evident. My inclination to explore, discover and experiment with music has been and is still part of my philosophy as a composer.

With so many types, styles and genres of music now becoming part of a world artistic scene I consider music with the analogy of a river nearly reaching the sea, fed by tributaries, dividing into many distributaries and forming a delta before reaching the main body of water. James Boros describes music past and present 'as consisting of many independent yet intertwined streams moving together through time and space, each with its own life cycle, and for a perspective which reveals their internal differentiation and heterogony' (1995, p. 548). The 'intertwined' part of this view could imply similarities and a close proximity whereas my opinion is that any style or genre may be assimilated and could influence composition(s) although not in the way of pastiche and more as a combination of techniques that include a flavour of the other while still being recognisably the individual composer's work. The influence of jazz in light music is an example of this assertion and can be detected in a number of composers: the use of syncopation in the music of Eric Coates has roots in jazz although the music is still very much in his style, *Façade* by William Walton overtly uses jazz throughout as the overall sound and Claude Debussy in the *Children's Corner Suite* includes 'Golliwogg's Cakewalk' to conclude the work which contains some original lyrical moments, indicative of the composer rather than the style.

In my analysis the influence of other musics does not mean employing polystylistic methods, in that there are juxtapositions of stylistic fragments or sections of music, but these influences could be described in what Phillip Glass calls a 'universalist' approach. 'What I really am -- and increasingly so -- is a *universalist* composer. I'm interested in all kinds of music, and sooner or later most of those musics find their way into my own compositions' (Glass in Page, 2005). These influences from many different experiences of music are absorbed into my personal style rather than being used as a series of recognisable yet meaningless gestures from whatever music in the world as Hewett described as 'global' (2003, p. 257). In my music there is an ingrained understanding that the music should follow a course that has continuity and is both thought provoking and entertaining.

Figure 6. 1. USGS EROS Data Centre. (2000). *Lena delta wildlife reserve*. Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lena_Delta_Wildlife_Reserve#/media/File:Lena_River_Delta_-_Landsat_2000.jpg.

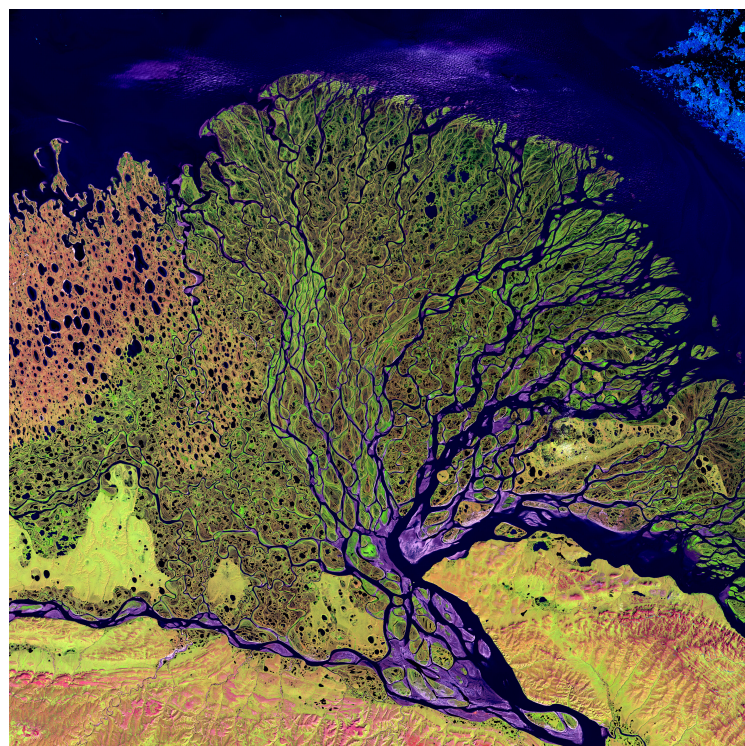


Figure 6. 1., taken by the Landsat 7 satellite, shows the Lena river delta in Siberia with the main river at the bottom right of the image and highlighting the bifurcation of the watercourse as it moves towards the Arctic Ocean at the top of

the picture. These divisions of the main watercourse sometimes find their own way to the ocean and others reconnect as they travel to some point to meet the main body of water. The crossing, reconnection or independent progress of the watercourses represents how I reflect on the music that I have composed and am still creating. The distributaries cross, mingle and disperse leaving a mixture of sediment that creates a new land mass or in musical terms the multiplicity of experiences influence each other to inspire the composition. During this course of this study I have reviewed the majority of my output, approximately forty years of compositions, and this appraisal has revealed some works that still appeal and others that I would not want to hear again. Listening to and researching as much music as I can is an all-embracing approach that is part of my search for a sound that satisfies my musical sensibilities at a point in time. My perception of sound has changed throughout my career and I suspect will continue to evolve as I become aware of new music, or new to me music, in the future.

This review of a few decades of composition output has shown what elements I consistently use to create my style. Melody is a very important aspect, even when it is just the rhythm of a melody that is being used, and the majority of my compositions have repeated recognisable tunes. As part of an experimental approach in this portfolio I have created rhythm only motifs and melodies, rather than using pitches, to assess if they are effective as a composition technique. The harmonic languages used during the works are influenced by a number of styles: jazz, latin, pop, contemporary and folk all used with my main working approach that the harmony should maintain a uniform tension throughout. This technique is investigated in most of the portfolio and especially in *Circumference 1* where the challenge was to start and end with simple, triadic, harmony but incorporate more complex harmony from be-bop during the work. Forms and structures are sometimes employed in the music, often based on strophic or rondo song styles, although many of the compositions are through-composed and transcribed from the usually complete idea in my mind to the full score. The last element of my composition is rhythm and the relationship of rhythms to a constant pulse. Rather than using indicators to slow down or speed up during my music I add or take away musical material with the pulse remaining constant. This method of composing has been influenced by my work as a percussionist,

the main requirement for a constant pulse in much of the music I perform and the difficulties of gradually changing speeds on certain instruments especially drum kit, shakers and tambourine.

The decisions and/or choices that I make and the experiences that inform those actions during composition have been influenced by an ever-expanding appreciation of sound and music that has lasted over fifty years. During this time I have explored various systems and methods of composition but it is only recently, with dedicated time for study and research, I have discovered the existence of a research methodology that corresponds to my preferred approach. This formalisation of the methods has given me greater confidence in both the process I use and the results that are produced.

The composition process I have developed follows the heuristic approach of engagement, immersion, incubation, illumination, explication and finally the creative synthesis (Moustakas, 1990) that I regard as the production of the music in the final form. I write mostly instrumental music and regard my composition practice as mainly autonomous and the use of a heuristic research methodology as the basis for the commentaries regarding the compositions in this thesis reveal the thoughts, doubts and decisions made during the process.

The substantive parts of this thesis are the original compositions that explore the concept of light music in the twenty-first century. Included in the portfolio are the scores to five works with a total duration of approximately one hour and forty minutes. Throughout the period of study I completed another three hours of original composition as well as forty minutes of commercial arranging and during 2015 edited and republished sixty works for digital download platforms.

Much of the composition and arranging I have completed during the past thirty years has been commercial in that it was often written for clients, to match a brief and invariably to deadlines some of which were very demanding. For much of my career the incubation, illumination and explication periods have frequently been truncated by the time constraints imposed by the commissioner's concert and rehearsal schedules or publishing deadlines.

Composing to the requirements of clients had ingrained some tendencies to work fast and not always fully realise the possibilities in the music. Other consequences of these production methods regularly involve considerations of the social, cultural and practical context of the music. The outcome could be influenced by the experience or mix of experiences of the performers, the different situations in which the work could be presented: concert hall, recorded, with other media and/or outside event, and for what audience: family, community or general.

Creating music with a contemporary or twenty-first century interpretation of light music for the PhD portfolio without the constraints of imminent deadlines or limitations of orchestrating for inexperienced performers has been liberating but has also involved considerable self-examination, uncertainty and inertia. My compositions using experimental concepts and unusual structures are not what would immediately spring to mind as mainstream light music conventions. One of my contentions is that light music composers are not constrained by any specific customs and practice other than creating accessible music that invariably has memorable melodic content. Magpie like they collect and take ideas for structure, timbre and harmony from many and any musical languages in a calculated way in order to create the required effect.

The decision to score all the works was deliberately taken in order to be able to fully consider all the musical material. This detachment from any audio engagement, my method was always to work with the speakers turned off, enabled me to fully realise structures, moods and orchestrations rather than just being carried along by the sounds that I often find is the result when working in an audio/studio environment. Even though *Summer Storm* was inspired by studio recordings the final work was assembled away from any audio distractions.

Many light music composers also consider the enterprising and marketable elements in their music as this is an important part of their livelihood. The compositions in the portfolio explore the established light music traditions of memorable melody and well-crafted orchestration and mix these with elements

of soundscape, *Musique Concrète*, aleatoric music, bebop, soul, samba, gospel and popular music styles at the same time taking into account the sensibilities of a light music audience with a view to expand the understanding of how the music evolves with contemporary practices. The outcome of this investigation is fully presented in the final work in the portfolio *Deranged Drums on Digital Vistas*.

The first works in the portfolio were written during a period of internal conflict. I knew there was ample time to complete the process but had to suppress the inclination to immediately complete the music or jump to the synthesis stage. Choosing to compose some works to the briefs of competitions and arrange some works for commercial clients, not included due to copyright considerations, maintained my established composition methods while I assimilated the freedoms offered by the course of study in the works for the portfolio. Creating the portfolio has been a long, sometimes troubled and mainly exhilarating journey from developed practice to one of heuristic research.

During my preliminary research for the PhD proposal I considered an overarching concept of composing repertoire for under-represented instruments. By under-represented I was thinking of instruments that had been invented or discovered in the previous one hundred and fifty years or so. Instruments such as the saxophone, bass guitar, drum kit and various percussion instruments are used rather than the more established such as the piano and violin. These recently developed instruments are generally more synonymous with jazz, popular and world music styles although latterly light and serious composers have utilised the many and varied percussion sounds and the saxophone has become identified with military, dance and concert bands rather than as a staple instrument of the orchestra.

This broad concept gave a starting point for the composition rather than contemplating a completely blank canvas. My initial concerns were that the compositions would be influenced by research in so many different areas that the final works would be a collection of pastiches or that there would be no music at all as with so much choice I would be paralysed by indecision or the

final works would be rushed and influenced, unconsciously or deliberately, by my previous tried and tested methods of working. I was inspired to experiment and create something new but was conscious of the amount of music I could research and was apprehensive of being overwhelmed by the choices available.

The portfolio of composition (*title*, instrumentation, year and *approximate duration*) includes:

<i>Summer Storm</i> percussion quartet with fixed media	2011	11'
<i>Confer to Bass</i> concerto for electric bass, strings and percussion	2012	15'
<i>Split-Screen Sinfonietta</i> Chinese and Western instruments	2012	10'
<i>Circumference 1</i> tenor saxophone and piano	2012	6'
<i>Deranged Drums on Digital Vistas</i> drum kit and percussion ensembles	2013	54'

Completing this review of the compositions and placing them in chronological order has revealed the turmoil and struggles between established and new methodologies that were affecting my judgements especially in the first two works *Summer Storm* and *Confer to Bass*. The composing of the *Split-Screen Sinfonietta* was a combination of old and new methods and was submitted for the deadline stipulated by the competition organisers which on reflection reverted to more old than new methods. *Circumference 1* was inspired by a competition brief but was not submitted at the time of the deadline as I had not fully immersed myself in the ideas. I had completed a version ready to submit but when I imagined a performance of the work I was not satisfied with a number of sections. The heuristic approach was beginning to have a significant influence on my composition methods and I determined that the final work *Deranged Drums on Digital Vistas* would only be ready when it was completed. This statement may seem obvious but the PhD composition journey has taken me from completing works in forty-eight hours, usually at the speed of one minute of composition per hour, to requiring over a year to conclude one work.

I chose to collect the ideas for the final work in a musical sketchbook that also noted and dated each entry as it arrived but I intentionally did not revisit any of the pages until the book was full. This process assembled ideas together in one place and for the first time I could analyse my creative output over a significant

period of time. I was hoping that the analysis could offer some explanations to a question that has interested me for a number of years: when, where and in what form do my creative ideas take? This will be discussed more fully in the commentary about the work. As a comparison or extension to this process I could have continued collecting ideas but major changes at work necessitated planning the recording and organising the premiere while I could access the resources and people to produce a reasonable representation of the music. This final process took over six months and the premiere was held in a J. D. Wetherspoon's public house on the 24th June 2014, ironically a performance of experimental light music in a bar that is generally known for not playing music at all.

The following sections detail the thoughts, experiments and methods that were part of the process of creating the compositions in the portfolio.

Summer Storm for percussion quartet with fixed media, CD.

[The score is book 2 of 6 in the submission and the environmental sounds can be accessed at <https://urbanskyline.bandcamp.com/album/summer-storm-accompaniment-sounds-to-the-percussion-quartet>].

I had been experimenting in the studio recording percussion sounds with the idea of combining these with an environmental recording of a storm I captured on a minidisc recorder with stereo microphone. The storm recording was uncontaminated by extraneous noises because it had been recorded around 3.00am with little or no extra sounds from traffic and/or aircraft noises which often compromise recordings at other times in my locality. It had lasted over ten minutes and the thunder noticeably went from one side to the other in the stereo field.

Inspiration from the accidental was the concept behind the recording of the percussion instruments. I had been recording some percussion for Matthew Herbert and was introduced to his philosophy of the 'Manifesto of Mistakes' (Herbert, 2000). His practice is mainly studio based, using the mix from previous sessions and listening to a new session with an older session's settings, and my interpretation was to record without considering what had gone before or what would come after. All the tracks were recorded individually without any reference to the environmental track and the process was completed over a number of weeks.

Deliberately using a long time frame for the recording process was to ensure I could not have an exact memory of what had been captured on any of the previous days that could influence the on-going performances. None of the percussion parts were prescribed or notated although the concept for the recording was to: perform sympathetically on the individual instruments to capture the unique nature and character of their sound(s), create recognisable motifs that could be repeated in the work, record fragments of sounds to be used to add colour to the music and create rhythmic themes that could be used as sections for the composition. These rhythmic themes were composed as I

would a melody with some repeated or repeated and developed ideas and contrasting section included to create an extended musical passage.

The instruments used for the recordings were: orchestral tambourine, pandeiro, riq, berimbau, claves [African and Cuban], mark tree, glass, shell, bamboo and metal wind chimes, tam tam, suspended cymbals, car suspension spring, Mexican bean, cabasa and thumb pianos from Western and African manufactures.

When 'enough' material had been recorded, an arbitrary decision, I unmuted all the tracks and considered the accidents of sound that had been created. Listening to the untreated version I identified a number of distinct sections that I decided sounded complete with a number of segments that I determined were rhythmically and instrumentally cluttered. Another choice made was to create an overall continuity of sound which then influenced the editing or removal of the more chaotic sections and further editing and aligning of sections and/or individual tracks to unify some of the assorted tempos and imprecise sound starts.

To this collection of percussive episodes I added the environmental recording which I initially intended to dictate the structure of the work. Some of the sections of percussion sounds were moved to compliment the sounds from the storm and placed to allow them to be heard as some of the thunderclaps were very forceful and obscured any other sound(s). At this stage in the compositional process I had a studio recording of percussion with environmental sounds but I was not convinced by the whole structure.

Inspired by these accidents I started to create a score with the aim of performance by a quartet of percussionists with the environmental recordings performed through a PA system. Still not convinced by the structure I created a pre-storm section that uses more unusual sounds from the percussion instruments to anticipate the coming storm but not reveal the environmental sounds at the beginning of the work. Including this extra section did not help the structural uncertainty I had identified and I still felt the work was unbalanced. To

complete the composition I added a final 'After the Storm' section that introduces melody and harmony for the first time during the work. The shape of the melody imitates the way the thunder had developed during the storm but without the intensity to create a sense of calm after the turbulence of the preceding section. I chose to harmonise the melody with a cluster of notes over an ostinato from timpani and snare drum with brushes. The reasoning behind these choices was to be able to create some subtle tensions of melody and harmony but not define any specific musical style or period with this section. The effect was to calm and create recognisable yet distinct musical timbres to complete the composition. There is a distant rumble of thunder at the end of the work as a reminder of the passing nature of the storm.

The structural choices for the work were most important in being able to relate the percussion sounds with a melody based light music aesthetic. The work was more soundscape/evocation with influences from the electroacoustic world and had to appeal to my sensibility of accessibility. Judging the duration of the abstract and rhythmic sections before any reference to a melodic section was in my mind the key to the success or failure of the work against these measures. Deliberation, editing and creating new sections of treated thunder sounds were completed, with the work settling at twelve minutes in duration.

The following examples show how the concepts of using unique instrumental sounds, motifs, fragments of sound and rhythmic themes are incorporated into *Summer Storm*. Some of the unique sounds are used in the opening section are: wind chimes manufactured using different materials of wood, shell or metal, the scraping effect on a tam tam and the sounds produced by placing a loose cymbal on the head of a pedal timpani and rolling on the cymbal while pedalling the drum. During this section these sounds are combined with more recognisable percussion sounds of claves and cymbals.

Motifs are used throughout the work with the four quaver cymbal figure from bar 22 used on the tom toms in bar 40 and then cymbals again, with some developments, in bars 108, 122, 201 and 215. Fragments of sound from shells (bars 44 and 45), headed tambourine (bars 49 to 51), brass prayer bowl with

bow (bar 55) and sleigh bells (114 and 115) add sound to various sections with the intention of creating subtle changes to the overall texture of sound.

The main rhythmic theme in the work is stated in full from bar 92 on the claves although fragments of the theme are introduced from bar 42 on claves or temple block. Options are given to enable the performers to select distinguishable wooden sounds from African claves, claves and temple block. The rhythmic theme is accompanied in parts by a number of contrasting rhythmic ideas performed on the timpani to produce sections of rhythmic counterpoint, example bars 100 to 107, which contrast with sections based on a single rhythmic idea such as can be found between bars 92 and 99.

The scoring process was carefully considered in order to achieve a reasonable to excellent performance from professional performers with limited rehearsal time, something that experience has shown to be necessary if the work is to have a number of performances. The choice of instruments for the final version was tempered by pragmatic choices regarding availability of instruments, the ability of some instruments to project their sound and a consideration of the experiences of the players. The complete list includes some options due to availability of some of the instruments and includes: three timpani, three contrasting wind chimes, loose cymbal, four tom toms, four suspended cymbals, claves or low temple block, bell tree, snare drum, bull roarer, metal prayer bowl (on drum), shells or cabasa, temple block, headed tambourine, tam tam, vibraphone, African claves, brass bowl (bowed), triangle, sleigh bells, riq [or ethnic tambourine], finger cymbals and chains.

The first performance was a condensed version for percussion trio and fixed media in Derby Cathedral. The performance opportunity was offered by the Derbyshire Singers to compliment their performance of *African Sanctus* by David Fanshawe. In practical terms many of the instruments and a PA system would be required for the *Sanctus* but the performance utilised three rather than four percussionists. In order to facilitate a performance a reduced version of the percussion parts was conceived and the few extra instruments for the *Summer Storm* performance were sourced. I have often been called upon to rearrange

works to enable performances as part of my commercial practice and the creation of a reduced version was completed quickly although it made for some swift changes between instruments in the percussion parts which the *Mixed Metals Percussion Ensemble* managed well even with limited rehearsal time. The complete quartet version was first performed as part of the 30th Anniversary Concert at the University Campus in Barnsley in 2011. [see CD 1, track 1].

Confer to Bass is a concerto for electric bass, strings and percussion.

The four movements are titled: 'Reunion', 'Debate', 'Recollection' and 'Expectation'.

[The score is book 3 of 6 in the submission].

The initial idea was to compose a work featuring the bass guitar with any other instruments having a subsidiary and/or accompaniment function similar to a main keynote presentation by the bass with some limited interjections, questions and answers, from other sounds. As I researched the influential bass guitar performers, especially James Jamerson (1936 - 1983) and Jaco Pastorius (1951 - 1987), the concept was revised to give the accompaniment parts a more substantial role. These changes were inspired by the instrumental arrangement and orchestration from soul and jazz music and especially the use of insistent rhythmic elements that create a groove and in some cases a more incessant rhythmic push or drive to the music. Jameson developed a style that rather than predominantly following the chord root notes incorporated syncopated rhythms and melodic phrases to produce bass lines that evolved throughout the music. The following two bar phrases in figure 6. 2. are taken from Marvin Gaye's 'What's Going On' (1971) track, from the album of the same name, and show the various developments, based around a B7 chord, at the end of each of the three verses. The full track is structured with three main sections, verse, chorus and instrumental that are used a number of times and during the restatements of these sections there are numerous examples of Jameson's developmental approach that enhance each repeat.

Figure 6. 2. Gaye, M. (1971). James Jamerson bass line on what's going on. On *What's Going On*. [CD and Digital]. Detroit: Motown.



The first movement 'Reunion' in *Confer to Bass* uses a similar approach and with the bass stating the main melody each repeated section includes thematic developments as can be seen in figure 6. 3. The first line is from the opening statement of the bass theme, the second is an example from midway through the movement and the final four bars are from the last section in the movement. For the purpose of this comparison the final line has been transposed into the key of other lines.

Figure 6. 3. Birkby, P. R. (2012). Reunion from *confer to bass*. (Not published).



Techniques to develop musical material each time it is repeated is any important element in light music, as analysed in chapter 4, and sometimes this is achieved by adding variations to the musical phrase but the more common practise is to change the sound for each repeated section using different orchestrations. The method of producing a number of variations for each repeated section of music that Jameson conceived fulfilled both of these criteria.

As the musical ideas were taking shape in my mind the question of what instrument or instruments would be versatile and adaptable to create the timbres needed for a number of different stylistic influences was at the forefront of my thinking. I considered keyboards, both piano and synthesiser, that could have given the rhythmic stability for the changing bass melodies to interact with but the lack of many variations in attack and the limited dynamic response as compared with blown or bowed instruments eventually ruled this family of instruments out of my deliberations. My next thought was bass guitar with a big band but that had stylistic connotations that I was trying to avoid although the timbres from brass, saxophones and possible woodwind were appealing. Finally I chose strings, instruments not known for their rhythmic accuracy but that have a versatility of timbres that would be effective contrasts to the electric bass sounds. I added to this some percussion mainly to articulate the more rhythmic and groove based elements that I had started to imagine and ensure that any rhythmic details in the bass could be conveyed more obviously in conjunction with more simple percussion ideas. To enhance the sound I also added the versatility of the vibraphone with the potential for melodic, chordal and percussive timbres as well as it being a sound reminiscent of soul and jazz. With a fixed set of sounds to work with and some sketches of music for each of the movements I then considered the title. Titles are important to me in that they can signpost the way the music will proceed or they offer a number of meanings to inspire tangential thoughts. The use of 'Confer' was deliberately chosen to be ambiguous, the meanings could relate to: talking, exchanging opinions or making a decision and it could be the giving of a title, honour or favour or elevating the electric bass to a status. I was hoping to elicit all these ideas from the audience during the course of the music as well as adding a work to the repertoire of the bass guitar.

The use of different harmonic languages and changes of key centres during the concerto was purposely adopted to articulate the various 'voices' that could be part of the conversations. This notion is also evident in the use of a number of different registers and the several types of accompaniment styles used in the strings. The structures used for each movement were chosen to relate to the titles with an established form for the 'Reunion' movement, a through-composed

The first movement based on a presentation as the stimulus for a musical form was reconsidered into the concept of a meeting or reunion with my interpretation of everyday social customs being the inspiration for the subsequent movements. Movement I 'Reunion' is a series of introductions and duets influenced by Jamerson and Pastorious with reference to the harmonies and rhythms of soul in the opening [A] section and jazz in the second [B] section. The movement is organised loosely on an AABA framework, the typical format for a jazz/standard song, again to reflect the music traditions these players inspired and innovated. The movement serves as a recognisable starting point before the explorations of sound, texture and timbre during the three following movements.

The first idea considered for the movement was a melodic phrase for the electric bass shown in the following figure.

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the Ab and F of the first whole bar of melody, the main notes in the next bar are the G and Eb with an extended anacrusis leading to the A and Eb of the next bar and a similar process to the G in the last bar. Each bar having one or two notes rather than a more complete arpeggio or scale allowed me to have a more flexible approach to the harmony to accompany this section.

The key signature implies Db major or Bb minor and the first few bars of the melody follow this in a diatonic fashion but then the A and G naturals quickly move away from the key which is a characteristic used by many light music composers as discussed in chapter 4. The basic harmony used for the six bars utilises a polychord of G minor over D^b major in bar 1, E^b minor in bar 2, D^b major for bar 3, C^b major to B^b minor in bar 4, B^b major to E^b7 in bar 5 and the final bar of the example has C major to G11 or G7 sus as the harmony. Having consistent harmonic tensions in terms of the dissonances within individual chords and those before and after is important to my compositional style and the analysis above only shows the basic harmonic progression. To maintain even tensions in the harmony as the movement progresses from the initial polychord the minor chords also include 7ths, 9ths, 11ths and 13ths with the major chords including added 7ths, 9ths and 13ths. The dominant 7th harmony does not have the same amount of tension as the major and minor chords with added notes, due to the tritone in the chord, and added notes and/or chord alterations are used in the dominant harmony to create a similar tension to the major and minor chords in the progression or the tritone is omitted by using a suspended chord.

Movement III 'Recollection' of past experience utilises chord and harmonic techniques on the bass contrasted by reflective lyrical solo sections inspired and influenced by Jaco Pastorius. Examples of these important elements of his style can be heard in recordings from: his solo repertoire 'Portrait of Tracy' from the album *Jaco Pastorius* (1976), his contributions to *Weather Report* on tracks like 'A Remark You Made' from the *Heavy Weather* album (1977) and as a collaborator with Joni Mitchell on the *Mingus* (1979) album where 'Goodbye Pork Pie Hat' features the bass in lead, chordal and accompaniment roles.

The third movement concludes with a cadenza that includes developments of musical material from all four movements and flows into the percussive opening of the final movement.

Movement IV 'Expectation' looks to advance the meeting and relationships. The opening section explores the rhythmic sounds produced by the techniques of slaps and pulls from the bass in a duet with the snare drum before the reappearance of a groove-based style for a positive finale. The percussion and bass interplay is developed throughout the movement with the strings alternating between either defining a simple pulse or stating harmonic changes by means of harmony performed using a carillon effect, not as Binge used to 'cascade' the sound but as a sound that adds more tension with each new note [see figure 6. 6.].

As of January 2016 the work had not been performed although the first movement, with a backing track, had been used during an undergraduate recital. [A MIDI impression of the work, without the cadenza, is included on CD 1, tracks 2 – 5].

Split-Screen Sinfonietta for a mixed chamber ensemble of Chinese and Western instruments.

[The score is book 4 of 6 in the submission].

Composing the music for the *Split-Screen Sinfonietta* acted as rehabilitation after a period of compositional apathy. I had completed two experimental works and what next? I could not think of anything to say and so immersed myself in my full-time management role and put any composition to the back of my mind. The competition call from the *Luxembourg Society for Contemporary Music* in partnership with the *Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra* to compose for an ensemble that contained half Chinese and half Western instruments immediately appealed to me. The cross-cultural nature of the instrumentation for the ensemble I found inspirational and corresponded with my overarching concept of composing for under-represented instruments. Many of the percussion instruments I use in my

works are from different cultures but to have an ensemble made up of the typical instruments found in two specific cultures was a new concept to me.

The brief required a single movement composition of between 10 and 12 minutes inspired by a series of nine images with the music for any one image not exceeding two minutes (Luxembourg Sinfonietta, 2012). I decided to approach this composition as a film score with my interpretations of the images dictating the narrative of the music rather than the more common collaboration between director and composer in this situation.

Figure 6. 5. Luxembourg Sinfonietta. (2012). Images from *international composition prize 2013*. Retrieved from http://www.luxembourg-sinfonietta.lu/html/composition_prize_2013/index.html.



I grouped the first three images together using a rhythmic two note, tone step motif throughout with continuously changing mixes of instruments and introduced a different lead sound to signify the changes between the images. At the fourth image the rhythmic impetus is replaced by lyrical duets between the Western and Chinese instruments.

The musical material follows the imagery for the fifth and sixth paintings in that there is a trio of ideas vying for attention in section five and the sixth section

uses mirroring techniques between the two instrumental groups. For the final three sections the percussion instruments from both cultures become more prominent with solo interjections between the atonal writing for image seven, African dance influences for image eight and the composition resolves to a popular song structure for the final section with some suggestions of *On Broadway* by Mann, Weil, Leiber and Stoller from 1963 and *Downtown* written and produced by Tony Hatch in 1964. The melody to this final section is similar to one of the main harmony statements in the final movement of *Confer to Bass* but has a completely different mood. In *Confer to Bass* the sound created is more dissonant as the strings sustain each melody note using Binge's 'cascading strings' technique as inspiration but create a much different effect as can be seen with the resulting chord in the third bar of figure 6. 6. [see strings from bar 14 onwards in the fourth movement, score page 60].

Figure 6. 6. Birkby, P. R. (2012). Expectation from *confer to bass*. (Not published).



The similar melody in the *Split-Screen Sinfonietta* in figure 19 is not sustained as in the previous example and is harmonised by the repetitive C and D major chords over a pedal D bass that creates a positive mood to this final section in the work [see cello and French horn from bar 189 onwards, score page 38].

Figure 6. 7. Birkby, P. R. (2012). *Split-screen sinfonietta*. (Not published).



The harmony part is given to the piano in a popular music accompaniment fashion rather than being divided between the instruments and the sequence starts over a D pedal followed by sections over G, B^b and E^b pedals.

The work was submitted by the deadline of 15th September 2012 but there was no other correspondence from the competition and as of January 2016 the work had not been performed. [A MIDI impression of the work is included on CD 1, track 6].

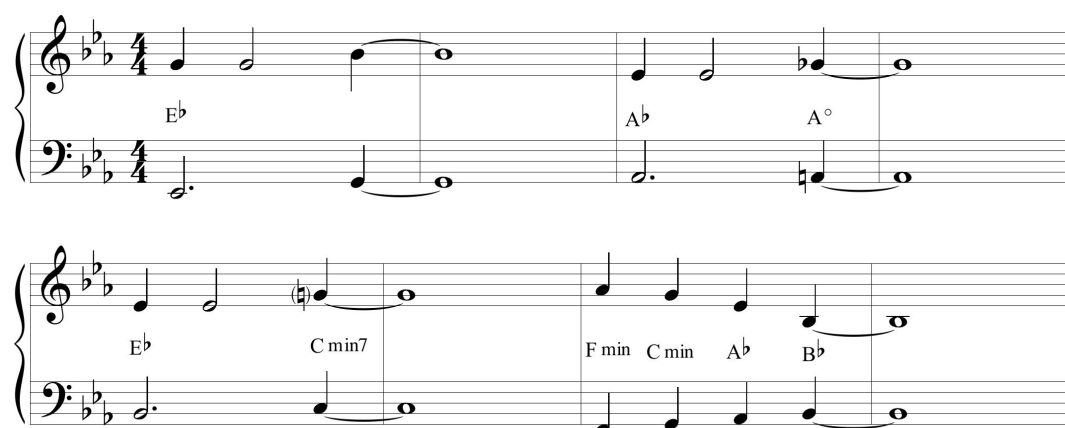
Circumference 1 for tenor saxophone and piano.

[The score is book 5 of 6 in the submission].

The concept for this composition came from the International Alkema Composition Contest in June 2012 and their aim “To stimulate and perform new compositions that can be distinguished by other contemporary works by means of cross-over elements.” (MatchingArts 2013). Light music composers often write in the style of their period taking influences from both high and low brow musics and this brief, with the express call for ‘cross-over elements’, corresponded well with my examination of a twenty-first century light music. The title was chosen to reflect a perimeter or boundary but also the continuous outer edge of a circle. The influences for the music follow the development from gospel to mainstream, be-bop and latin jazz styles concluding with popular song influences that could return directly to the gospel music of the opening.

Figure 6. 8. shows how the melody was derived from a typical gospel chord sequence of I, IV, I, V using a descending sequential motif to contrast with the ascending bass line created by using inversions, chord substitutions and the addition of passing chords.

Figure 6. 8. Birkby, P. R. (2012). *Circumference 1*. South Kirkby: www.prbpnews.info.



The composition was through-composed and it was envisaged that the music would travel around a circle ending back where it started. During the work the harmony changes from simple triads to extended chords and to facilitate these changes in an unobtrusive way each repeat of the melody becomes more harmonically and texturally dense. To move back to the simple harmony of the opening from the tensions of the be-bop section I used a section with mainly quartal harmony followed by a repetitive salsa influenced chord sequence of minor 9th to dominant 13th. The writing for tenor saxophone and piano explore the full range of the instruments although does not exploit any extended saxophone techniques. This aspect was considered as part of an enterprising outlook with a view to commercially exploiting the work and producing accessible music for the advanced student/professional performer market rather than using more intricate techniques that could limit interest to only a small group of advanced saxophonists. As of January 2016 the work had not been performed [a MIDI impression of the work is included on CD 1, track 7].

Deranged Drums on Digital Vistas for drum kit and percussion ensembles.

‘no vestige of a beginning, - no prospect of an end.’ (Hutton, 1795)

[The score is book 6 of 6 in the submission].

The final work in the portfolio is the most radical work. It is a multi-stylistic composition that takes influences from classical, jazz, world and popular musics and was written with the idea that the drum kit could be the main instrumental sound in a light music work, not for novelty or show but as a solo, accompaniment and recurring texture that unites the many sections of music.

Research into music for drum kit, or the American version drum set, revealed *Concerto for Drum Set and Percussion Ensemble* (1979) by John H. Beck is established in the percussion ensemble repertoire and a few short concertos for drum set with wind band are well promoted to ‘feature’ the player. The collaborations between composer Mark-Anthony Turnage and drummer Peter Erskine have generated *Blood On The Floor* (1996), *Scorched* (2001) and most recently *Erskine – Concerto for Drum Set and Orchestra* (2013) which all have prominent drum kit parts with *Panic* (1995), the concerto for saxophone and drum kit, by Sir Harrison Birtwistle and the *Drum Dances* (1993) by John

Psathas being other notable works yet there is not much more significant repertoire compared with other instruments.

The initial concept for *Deranged Drums on Digital Vistas* was to compose between fifteen and twenty minutes of music for a percussion ensemble with the drum kit as the featured instrument. The majority of the music would be notated for the drum kit, some elements would be part notated and part described, and all the accompaniment parts would be fully notated. I was concerned that the structure of the work would be too similar to that of *Confer to Bass* and decided to collect ideas together before determining a final version for the work. I am relieved that the final approach was very different to the concerto format and used a multiplicity of theories, styles and influences dictated by the concepts and notes that I had gathered together in the sketchbook as this is how my style has recently developed.

The first ideas for the music started to appear in March 2013 and to be able to document the composition process as well as revealing the dates when ideas were first formulated I created a music sketchbook from some old manuscript paper and began writing a blog at <http://ddodv.wordpress.com>. The aspiration for the blog was to write one post per week about the development of the composition although this was soon modified to include posts about general music concerns and influential events that affected my local community. Keeping a sketchbook was the first time I have ever kept a record of when the creative ideas arrived and what processes and techniques were used in the creation of the music that I hoped would offer an insight into my composing methods.

I experimented with a drum kit in the recording studio (example at <https://soundcloud.com/music-54-4/ddodv-idea2-treatment-2>) recording rhythmic motifs and then altering the sounds using various effects and processors to try and create melodies from the sounds that could relate to the concept of light music being based on instrumental melody. These experiments provided interesting sounds to work with although the limitations of needing extra equipment and electricity in a safe environment were also considered. How and

where the final work could be performed was an important consideration as I wanted to be able to take the music to the audience rather than having the audience come to a concert venue. This dictated that all the instruments used would be acoustic as I do not use the motor on the vibraphone and possible performance spaces could include outdoor as well as indoor areas.

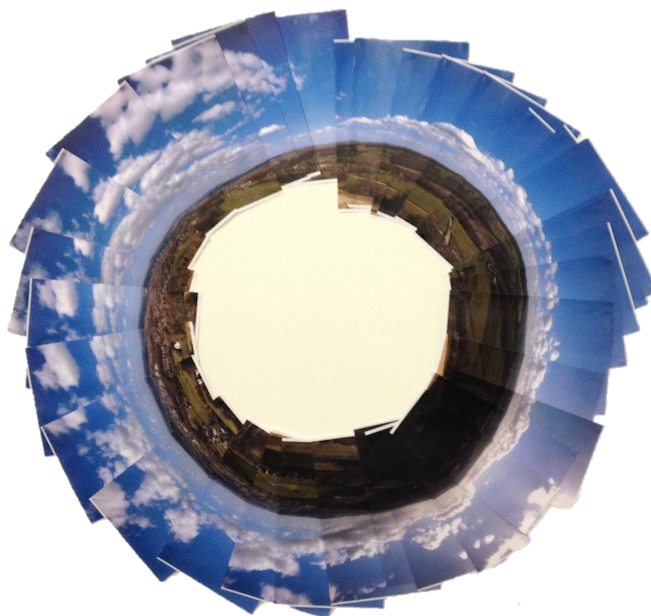
The immersion period was spent collecting ideas and documenting when the inspiration arrived. I have often questioned how and why my ideas, and creative ideas in general appear and this approach would allow some insight into the procedure. Picasso was an advocate of work each day and see where the day takes you approach although the approach for this composition ended up being quite the opposite with very little work or practice, my management role did not allow for much research time during 2013, and I would write down what ideas I thought of as soon as I could or when they were happening and then leave them. These ideas were notated and described in the sketchbook for a period of nine months between March and December 2013. Many of the first entries were melodies or bass lines to accompany the drum kit and eventually more rhythmic ideas started to be included as well. During this time I did not score or complete any of these sketches as I had not decided on the final format and I made a point of not looking at any of the previous sketches so as not to influence any further inspiration until there was enough material for the composition. On a visit to the Natural History Museum in London I saw James Hutton's words 'no vestige of a beginning, - no prospect of an end' (1795) on one of the exhibits and this was the inspiration for how the music would be structured in the work.

During this period I was regularly commuting between Oldham, Huddersfield and Barnsley and was experimenting with mobile phone photography to try and encapsulate the environment that has influenced my work from my childhood in Lancashire to my working life spent predominantly in Yorkshire. I stopped at a number of vantage points on the Pennines and took 360 degree photographs as individual vistas to be put together similar to the technique used by David Hockney in his photographic collages rather than using the phone's panorama setting. The version used on the covers of the score and parts was taken from

Castle Hill, near Huddersfield, around but not including the Victoria Tower and this picture aided in deciding the final order of the music in the work. Each of the 37 sections of music have 'Vista' in the title and these can be connected to the image as interpretations of sections of the final collage.

The instrumentation for the work uses two ensembles that perform independently of each other and one of the ways I interpreted this was that one would depict the land and the other the sky. The relationship between these two elements in the picture is transitory yet fixed by the taking of the photographs although the process of capturing the 360° photographs took about twelve minutes to complete so it is not a snapshot more of a video in stills. The idea of a passing and continually evolving relationship between the land and sky is reflected in the options for the performers to start the work at any of the 'Vistas' and then continue in a linear fashion from that point. As the picture has no defined start or finish neither does the music and some elements of the music overlap and others are separate to suggest different methods of viewing the imagery.

Figure 6. 9. Birkby, P. R. (2013). 360° from Castle Hill. (Not published).



At the end of December 2013 I looked back at all the ideas I had been collecting during the previous months and started the process of editing, amalgamating and discarding these before scoring the 37 sections. There were originally 36

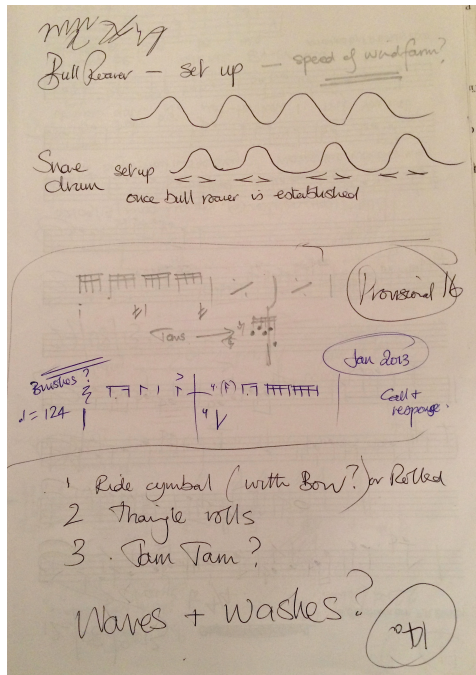
sections but after a very good friend and colleague died another idea came to mind and would not go away and I included this in the final work, 'Vista S' is dedicated to Jan Faulkner.

I discussed the concept, ideas and times for a possible performance with drummer and percussionist Peter Fairclough and he took away the first draft of the score with some examples of the accompanying sounds. Further discussions followed until the music was clearly written and described and late May or June 2014 was identified as the time for the performance.

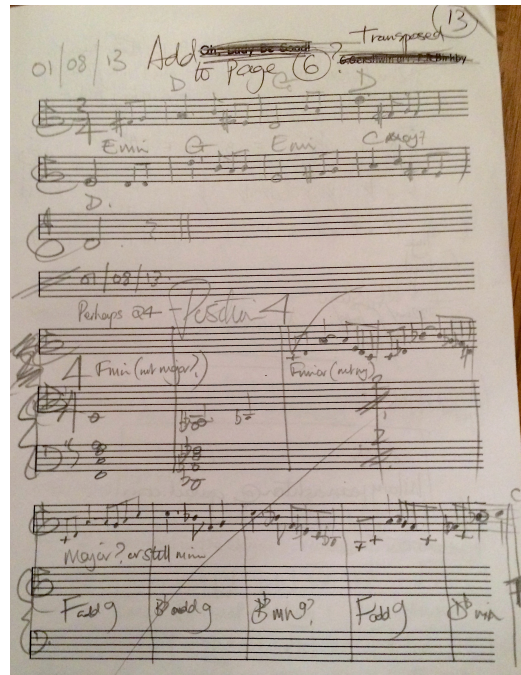
As there was no temporal sequence to the inspiration or mood swings the concept of producing a work that had fixed musical ideas yet a number of ways of ordering the ideas based on chance was formulated. The work was envisaged as an evolving musical experience that can reveal different musical qualities at each performance rather than with a polystylistic or serendipitous approach although this could be the consequence of some of the juxtapositions of ideas.

Revisiting the notebook in 2015 revealed there were periods during the year when there was nothing, no inspiration, not even a thought about the music as the burden of administrative duties in higher education took precedence over any other thoughts. At other times there were productive weeks with distinct ideas and concepts appearing and the following images are from the sketchbook with the titles of the final compositions below.

Figure 6. 10. Birkby, P. R. (2013). Examples from sketchbook for *deranged drums on digital vistas*. (Not published).



Top 'Vista Q'
 Middle 'Vista H'
 Lower 'Vista E'



Top part of 'Vista 7'
 Lower 'Vista 4'

A condition I set myself at the start of the procedure was not to review any of the material until the sketchbook was full and in the end this process took nine months. When I analysed the material there were fifty ideas with six of the later ones being very similar to earlier sketches (some of the ideas in July were variations on ideas from March).

To create the different movements or 'Vistas' in the composition I utilised a number of techniques taken from various styles and genres. Light music composers seldom have an affiliation with one musical style or opinion and the final composition is an eclectic fusion of the experiences that have influenced my writing up to 2013. There are elements of Tchaikovsky, Ellington, World, dance and aleatoric musics coalesced in times of stress, bouts of uncertainty and periods of positivity. Figure 6. 11. shows how the rhythmic ideas from the waltzes from the ballets of Tchaikovsky were one of the main influences for 'Vista 14'.

Figure 6. 11. Birkby, P. R. (2013). Vista 14 from *deranged drums on digital vistas*. South Kirkby: www.prbpnews.info.



Although the ballets are not regarded as light music when part of the staged version the individual scenes have been assimilated into the style as the trend on popular classics radio stations like *Classic FM* of isolating movements from suites or symphonies becomes more the norm.

The many and various influences in the work are united by the use of unpitched percussion interludes each of which was composed with a rhythmic melody in mind. Figure 6. 12. is the first of these examples from 'Vista B' [score p. 2] and is performed by wooden sounds.

Figure 6. 12. Birkby, P. R. (2013). Vista B from *deranged drums on digital vistas*. South Kirkby: www.prbpnews.info

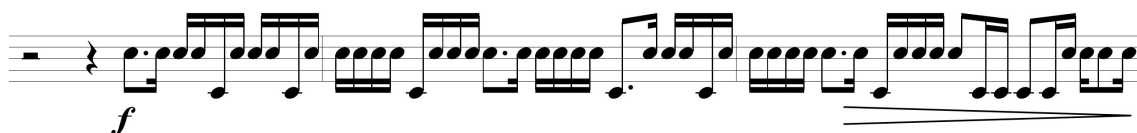


Figure 6. 13. is the opening rhythmic melody of 'Vista F' performed by sandpaper blocks [score p. 8].

Figure 6. 13. Birkby, P. R. (2013). Vista F from *deranged drums on digital vistas*. South Kirkby: www.prbpnews.info.



The final example is a variation of the rhythmic theme introduced on the snare drum in 'Vista S' and then taken up by the tom tom in figure 6. 14. [score p. 33].

Figure 6. 14. Birkby, P. R. (2013). Vista S from *deranged drums on digital vistas*. South Kirkby: www.prbpnews.info.

continues sequentially finishing with 'Vista S'. The second set of 'Vistas' in the score are to allow for an easy continuation, rather than having to turn back pages to the beginning, if the work is started at any points other than 'Vistas A and 1' in the performance. [see CD 2, track 1].

Chapter 7

Reflection.

The past few years of research, analysis and reflection have provided an opportunity to realise how many influences and constraints have affected my composition output during the past thirty-five years. The research and formulation of the mind map is illuminating as to how my work during this period was shaped by many external factors, mostly work, employment and financially related. My personal study regarding the questions of how creative ideas appear and can they be controlled and at times nullified is still on-going although the preliminary results show that if non-creative concerns become dominant the inspiration is checked but does not disappear and is likely to show itself at any moment. When my creativity is given the time and conditions to flourish it does so nonstop and in terms of a heuristic approach to working with this inspiration some initial choices are needed before further development and many of these choices are affected by financial decisions.

Most of my professional career has been guided by commercial or pragmatic prospects without much detailed consideration of the creative and artistic consequences of my writing. Studying for the PhD has given me time to consider the music that I create and how these compositions relate to works by present-day composers, in similar and divergent styles. The inspiration, production and company administration that now form a part of many composers, and creative artists, lives with the added tasks of promotion, marketing and sometimes distribution was the stimulus for the following poem.

The artist's dilemma

To become or never to start
To consider commercialising art
To have a presence, a business plan
To work to deadlines, a creative span
To produce to order in multiples of ten
To limit an edition for a premium of yen

The music, design, craft and installation
The photograph, film, plan and collection
The novel, sculpture, painting and rap

The fashion, concerto, print and map
The song, play, performance and comedy
The dance, poem, story now parody

All promoted online with image and dots
All with fifty word descriptions and a few still shots
All have the walk through showing three-sixty degrees
in a virtual space dressed up for the needs
All with a facilitator who shares in all the sales
recycling a package of tried and tested tales
All to interest buyers, bait them with a promise,
investment and returns to silence doubting Thomas

What is the alternative?
Why is it so competitive?
Where should I look to grow?
Who's the person in the know?
How will I survive?
Will the press release help me stay alive?

For many centuries a patron was the key
For the artist they were a necessity
Forward looking cultural supporters
Fortunes spent on creative courtiers
Formal works to mark an occasion
For a better world not tax evasion

Now the patrons are hiding away
Now the choice is too difficult to play
Now the artist is an enterprise
Now a company is the disguise
Now all educated with a degree
Now with the skills for everyone to see

The web
The pins
The blog
The shop
The merch
The videos
The photos
All cropped
The social connections
The online directions
Converge on a landing page

Two clicks away from a sale is a maximum
It's starting to sound like a load of old patter
Set up for websites that give of the optimum
But written with passion and a sense that it matters

Many the offers pop up to take the strain
With expensive monthly fees that will just drain
Take cash from the artist that could be invested
In time and space for new ideas suggested

Be wary out there as a buyer or seller
Your newest connection could be a cave dweller
Solitary life with the time to think
Something we all need before we sink
In the corporate money chasing scheme
We sense we're free but it's all just a dream
Get back to it now, must create to order
And don't forget to set the video recorder
(Birkby, 2015)

Despite the recent calls on my time from marketing and promotional activities I now have assuredness and confidence in the music that I compose. As the artist Anne Truitt (2013, p. 17) described in her diaries, 'it became clear to me that I was doing work I respected within my own strictest standards. Furthermore, I found this work respected by those whose understanding of art I valued.' It is very rare for musicians to complement each other on a job well done, that is taken as read, and having the self-awareness to be certain of the musical results has motivated me to create more music. I have become more aware of the sounds that I hear and the music that I create as I immerse myself in new experiences and can often relate my inspiration to sounds and music from other places and times. In the past this would put a block on any continuation of the work as I was concerned it was not original but now I realise it is part of the creative process and a stage in the production of my light music for the twenty-first century.

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A Twenty-first Century Light Music Composer

CD track lists

All music composed by Peter R. Birkby

CD 1	Duration
1 Summer Storm Performed November 1 st 2011 by the <i>Mixed Metals Percussion Ensemble</i> [Peter Birkby, Matthew Dabbs, Steven Kohut and Michael Parkin] as part of a 30 th Anniversary Concert to celebrate prbp publishing.	11:04
2 Confer to Bass Movement 1 'Reunion' [MIDI version for demonstration only]	3:54
3 Movement 2 'Debate' [MIDI version for demonstration only]	3:39
4 Movement 3 'Recollection' (no cadenza included) [MIDI version for demonstration only]	3:13
5 Movement 4 'Expectation' [MIDI version for demonstration only]	3:36
6 Split-Screen Sinfonietta [MIDI version for demonstration only]	9:36
7 Circumference 1 [MIDI version for demonstration only]	5:41

CD 2

1 Deranged Drums on Digital Vistas	55:35
Performed by Peter Fairclough and the <i>Mixed Metals Percussion Ensemble</i> : Peter Birkby, Nigel Chapman, Matthew Dabbs, Steven Kohut, Mike Parkin, Keith Ramskill, Phil Steventon and Leo Le Yu. Live and studio recordings completed June 24 th 2014 in Barnsley.	

This version is a mixture of studio and live recordings and the starting point of 'Vista A' followed by 'Vista 1' and finishing with 'Vista S'.